NATION

‘Nobody can claim govt land under Waqf’

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BUSINESS

India well-placed to tackle US tariff impacts: Moody’s

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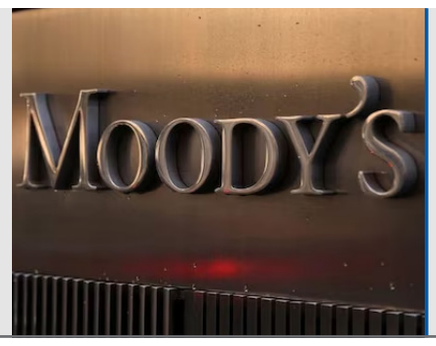

SPORTS

GT eye top-two finish as struggling Lucknow look to salvage pride

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Govt to stop underground parking in City’s lower areas

CM, DKS tour the City to take stock of situation amid floods

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday announced that the government will soon introduce a policy prohibiting underground parking in low-lying areas of Bengaluru, following days of heavy rainfall that led to widespread waterlogging and inundation across the city.

Speaking to reporters while inspecting rain-hit areas alongside Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar said the government is committed to addressing flooding issues and ensuring the City’s long-term development.

“I’m taking a policy decision that underground parking will not be permitted in low-lying areas going forward. Instead, parking will need to be above ground. We’ve seen water seeping into these underground spaces, making them unsafe,” Shivakumar stated.

He assured the public that the government is actively addressing the crisis. Shivakumar confirmed that officials are working around the clock to manage the situation and noted that two people had tragically died by electrocution during the rains. “They tried to operate the motor during the flooding. I visited their families, and we’ve announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh each,” he added.

In a striking moment during the officials’ visit, a red carpet laid out in flood-hit HBR Layout was hastily removed following public outrage. The gesture drew sharp criticism from residents. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Residents of Sai Layout argue with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during his City rounds to assess the rain-affected areas in Bengaluru on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

ED searches institutions linked to Parameshwara

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches at 16 locations across Karnataka, including educational institutions allegedly linked to Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara, as part of a money laundering probe tied to a gold smuggling racket involving actor Ranya Rao.

According to official sources, the ED conducted searches at Sri Siddhartha Medical College and Sri Siddhartha Institute of Technology in Tumakuru, and Sri Siddhartha Institute of Medical Sciences in Nelamangala, near Bengaluru.

The searches, carried out under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), targeted hawala and accommodation entry operators accused of funnelling fake financial transactions into Rao’s accounts. ED sources said an educational trust—linked to Parameshwara—allegedly diverted funds and paid Rs 40 lakh towards Rao’s credit card bills on the instruction of a politically exposed individual. No documentation was found to substantiate the transaction.

The ED’s case is based on previous complaints filed by the CBI and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), related to a wider gold smuggling network. Officials said some hawala operators admitted to facilitating illegal foreign exchange for gold procurement and confirmed dealings with Rao. Buyers also reportedly admitted to purchasing gold from her and reselling it to jewellers. Rao is accused of laundering money through fake transactions, including false consultancy income and payments from firms claiming she supplied construction labour. Entities conducting unauthorised forex transactions were also uncovered during the raids. *—PTI*

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara ***PHOTO: PTI***

27 Naxalites killed in Chhattisgarh

NARAYANPUR, 21 MAY

27 Naxalites have been killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh’s Bastar region, with sources claiming that top Maoist leader Basavaraju was among them. A member of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) was also killed in action while some others sustained injuries. Sources claimed that Nambala Keshava Rao alias Basavaraju, the general secretary of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) who was in his late 60s, was among the slain Maoists, though not confirmed officially. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Tamil Nadu sues Centre over education funds

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The Tamil Nadu government has filed a suit in the Supreme Court against the Union Ministry of Education, alleging the Centre has unlawfully withheld over Rs 2,151 crore in central funds under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme for 2024–2025. Invoking Article 131 of the Constitution, the state claims the Centre attempted to coerce it into implementing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the PM SHRI Schools Scheme—both of which Tamil Nadu has consistently opposed, particularly the three-language formula. *—PTI*

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Madras HC stays appointment of TN’s Vice Chancellor

CHENNAI, 21 MAY

Madras High Court on Wednesday granted an interim stay for a specific provision that enables the Tamil Nadu government to appoint vice-chancellors to state-run varsities.

A Division Bench of Justices GR Swaminathan and V Lakshmi Narayanan granted the stay amid staunch opposition of the state government against taking up the case in haste. An advocate, also a functionary of the BJP is the petitioner. *—PTI*

More on Page 3

BJP MLA Munirathna booked for gangrape

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

An FIR has been filed against BJP MLA Munirathna and his accomplices after a 40-year-old woman accused him of gangraping her and urinating on her face and injecting her with a virus, police said on Wednesday.

The FIR was registered by a BJP worker at RMC Yard police station on Tuesday, they said.

The woman alleged that the incident occurred at the MLA’s office in Mathikere on 11 June, 2023. The complainant alleged that she was taken to his office in a car by his accomplices.

Three accomplices of the MLA involved in the incident have been named in the FIR while the identity of the fourth accused is unknown.

She alleged that after reaching his office, the MLA along with two of his accomplices allegedly stripped her and he even threatened to kill her son if she did not co-operate. Munirathna then instructed the two men to rape her, the FIR stated.

According to the FIR, the MLA allegedly threatened her that if she disclosed it to anyone, he will not spare her family.

In January, she was hospitalised and she was allegedly diagnosed with an incurable virus and she connected dots with the injection incident.

The complainant also mentioned about a previous incident, where the BJP MLA had allegedly influenced others to file false cases against her at Peenya and RMC Yard police stations.

Later, when she was released from jail, the MLA’s accomplices met her and assured her that Munirathna would help clear the charges against her and under that pretext, she was allegedly lured back to his office. *—PTI*

BJP MLA Munirathna ***PHOTOS: /X@ MUNIRATHNA***

Traffic mgmt expert Saleem to head K’taka police

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

The Karnataka government appointed MA Saleem, a 1993-batch IPS officer, as the new Director-General and Inspector-General of Police (DG&IG) on Wednesday. Saleem succeeds Alok Mohan, who retired from service today.

Saleem was the DG (CID), Special Units, and Economic Offences, Bengaluru.

The State government had extended the tenure of the outgoing Mohan by 21 days, pushing his retirement from April 30 to 21 May. Mohan, a 1987-batch IPS officer, was set to complete two years in the top post on 22 May, making the extension legally consistent with the Supreme Court’s directive mandating a fixed two-year tenure for state police chiefs.

He had been appointed in 2023 after his predecessor Praveen Sood left for central deputation as CBI Director.

Saleem took charge as the new DG&IG on Wednesday. Saleem (59 years) is a post-graduate in Commerce and holds a doctorate in traffic management.

Popularly known as “one-way” Saleem for the 122 one-ways he introduced to ease traffic issues in Bengaluru during his tenure as Deputy Commissioner (Traffic-East), Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic and Security), and as the Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic).

He is credited with introducing the “Public Eye”—a citizens’ participation program in traffic enforcement in Bengaluru and Mysuru cities.

He also launched the “Safe Routes to School” programme in Bengaluru to ensure the safety of school children. *—Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2

MA Saleem IPS, takes charge as the new DG & IGP of Karnataka on Wednesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

WILDLIFE DIPLOMACY

Five Kumki elephants paraded at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday during an official handing-over ceremony to Andhra Pradesh ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*** ***>>>More on Page 2***

Body of girl stuffed in suitcase found near Anekal rly stn

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

The body of an unidentified girl was discovered stuffed inside a suitcase near railway tracks in Chandapura, Anekal, on the outskirts of Bengaluru on Wednesday, police said.

According to officials, there were no visible injury marks on the body, which is believed to belong to a woman aged 18 or above. Her identity is yet to be established. Preliminary investigation suggests that the woman may have been murdered elsewhere and her body stuffed into the suitcase before it was disposed of in the isolated area. Investigators suspect the suitcase was thrown from a moving train. *—PTI*

India expels 2nd Pakistan diplomat

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

India on Wednesday expelled a Pakistani official working at the Pakistan High Commission here on charges of indulging in activities not in keeping with his official status.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the official has been given 24 hours to leave the country.

It said the Charge d’Affaires of the Pakistan High Commission was issued a demarche to this effect.

“He was asked to strictly ensure that none of the Pakistani diplomats or officials in India misuse their privileges and status in any manner,” the MEA said in a statement.

On 13 May, India expelled a Pakistani official for allegedly indulging in espionage. *—PTI*

SC schools Ashoka Prof on ‘choice of words’, gives bail

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted interim bail to Ashoka University professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad, arrested for his contentious social media posts on Operation Sindoor. However, the Court refused to stay the ongoing investigation.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh directed the Haryana DGP to form a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) within 24 hours, headed by an IG-rank officer and including a woman SP-rank officer. All officers must be directly recruited IPS officers serving in Haryana but not originally from the state.

The Court granted bail to facilitate further investigation and directed Mahmudabad to surrender his passport. The bench expressed concern over the language used in his post, stating that a learned person should have shown greater sensitivity and used more neutral language. “This is dog whistling in legal parlance,” Justice Kant remarked.

Mahmudabad, who heads the Political Science department at Ashoka University, was arrested on 18 May following two FIRs. He was sent to judicial custody till 27 May by a Sonipat court. The FIRs, based on complaints by the Haryana Women’s Commission chairperson and a village sarpanch, accuse him of promoting enmity, public mischief, and actions endangering national integrity.

The bench barred him from posting further on the India-Pakistan conflict and the Pahalgam terror attack, questioning the timing and tone of his remarks. His counsel, Kapil Sibal, argued there was no criminal intent and noted Mahmudabad’s pregnant wife. *—PTI*

1ST WIN FOR KANNADA TITLE

Kannada author Banu Mushtaq wins Booker

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Lawyer, activist, feminist, and celebrated Kannada writer Banu Mushtaq made literary history on Wednesday by winning the 2025 International Booker Prize for her short story collection ‘Heart Lamp’, translated from the Kannada Hridaya Deepa by Deepa Bhasthi.

This is the first time a Kannada title has received the award and only the second Indian language work to win, following Geetanjali Shree’s ‘Tomb of Sand’ in 2022.

‘Heart Lamp’ is a collection of 12 short stories written between 1990 and 2023, chronicling the lives of women in patriarchal communities in southern India. The stories explore themes such as reproductive rights, social control, and the daily oppression faced by women in orthodox societies. Mushtaq, 77, has spent decades advocating for women’s rights, and her writing reflects those struggles. The book’s blurb notes that her portraits of family and community tensions testify to her tireless activism against caste and religious oppression.

Judges praised the collection for its “witty, vivid, colloquial, moving and excoriating” style. Max Porter, Chair of Judges, called the book a “radical translation” that creates “new textures in a plurality of English”.

The prize GBP 50,000, split between Mushtaq & Bhasthi. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2 & 5

> **Heartiest congratulations to the proud Kannada writer Banu Mushtaq for winning the International Booker Prize for Literature. This is a time to celebrate Kannada, Kannadigas and Karnataka**
>
> —Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

> **This book was born from the belief that no story is ever small, that in the tapestry of human experience every thread holds the weight of the whole In a world that often tries to divide us, literature remains one of the lost sacred spaces where we can live inside each other’s minds, if only for a few pages**
>
> —Banu Mushtaq, Booker winner

SAI LAYOUT STILL SUBMERGED; RESIDENTS QUESTION EFFORTS

With sumps now contaminated, even clean water is a tough find

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

Even after a night without rain in the City, Sai Layout remained considerably waterlogged on Wednesday.

The 140mm of rainfall, from late Sunday night until Tuesday, resulted in widespread flooding throughout the City. The inhabitants of Sai Layout, however, were particularly affected. Several residences on the ground and first floors remained inaccessible.

A team from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) engaged in efforts to clear drainage systems and pump out the accumulated water. Nevertheless, numerous residents expressed their frustration with the gradual pace of the endeavours.

Surya, an IT professional, said "a single instance of rainfall caused a nearly five-foot increase in water levels, inundating our entire home. We also lack access to potable water because the sump was contaminated."

Another resident remarked, "the absence of electricity for three days rendered even those of us capable of working remotely unable to do so."

Residents also voiced concerns regarding what they perceive as a political exchange of blame. Many contend that the State and Centre are deferring responsibility, particularly in relation to a small railway culvert that consistently becomes obstructed during rain.

A tree was uprooted, at Cunningham Road, on Wednesday; a dog wading through the waters in Sai Layout *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD/PTI*

"BBMP states that they are unable to clear the vent as it falls under the jurisdiction of Indian Railways, while railway officials have reportedly denied receiving any such request," a resident said.

The Shirdi Saibaba Temple, after which the locality is named, also sustained significant damage. Dayananda, the temple chairman, reported,

"The entire temple has been damaged, and documents have been washed away. The generator, for which I invested Rs 6.5 lakh, is irreparable. All the water from Hebbal is now being diverted here. Twenty years ago, this area was merely a jungle."

Several families whose ground-floor homes remain flooded say they have no alternative accommodation. Many are unwilling to leave their possessions unattended. Some also reported a lack of substantial evacuation assistance or temporary shelter provided by the government or BBMP.

The repetitive nature of this crisis has left residents feeling exhausted and disillusioned, as Sai Layout continues to confront the same challenges annually, despite assurances from authorities. *—PTI*

Kumki elephants given to Andhra Pradesh Dy CM Pawan Kalyan in the presence of State CM Siddaramaiah and Dy CM DK Shivakumar at Vidhana Soudha, on Wednesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

State hands over 6 Kumki elephants to Andhra Pradesh

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday stressed the need for cooperation and coordination between states in mitigating human-elephant conflicts, as State handed over six Kumki (trained) elephants to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Four elephants were handed over by the State government to Andhra Pradesh at an event attended by Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan. The remaining two will be handed over later, Siddaramaiah said.

The elephants will be used to control herds of rogue elephants in Andhra Pradesh.

The Kumki are: Krishna, 15, which was captured in Chikkamagaluru in 2022; Shivamogga Abhimanyu, 14, captured in Honnali in 2023; Deva, 39, captured in Kushalnagar in 2019; and Ranjan, 26, born in Dubare camp.

Siddaramaiah said there are 3,695 elephants in the State, probably the highest in the country.

"In recent times, the human-elephant conflicts are increasing and cooperation of all states is important to prevent it. Only when there is coordination with other states, the conflicts can be brought down," he said. "Increasing forest cover and protecting the forest is the responsibility of all states".

Pawan Kalyan thanked State government for its help.

"Their mitigation measures are excellent and we are learning from the Karnataka government," he said. "We did not request elephants. It is their (Karnataka's) large heartedness. Even if they had given two elephants it was enough."

Asked whether this is a new beginning in the relationship between the states, Kalyan said, "Exactly, this is what State Deputy CM DK Shivakumar also said. He spoke about talking to Andhra Pradesh CM Chandrababu Naidu regarding Tungabhadra water sharing." *—PTI*

CM condemns SBI Manager for refusing to speak Kannada

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

State Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday condemned the behaviour of an SBI Branch Manager in Anekal taluk for refusing to speak in Kannada after a video of her allegedly arguing with a customer over the State's language went viral.

During the purported argument between the branch manager and the customer in the video that surfaced on Tuesday, the manager can be

heard saying that "I will not speak in Kannada for sure..... but Hindi."

She could be repeatedly heard saying that she would not speak in Kannada even as the customer cited Reserve Bank of India regulations, claiming that bank employees are required to communicate in the regional language.

"The behaviour of the SBI Branch Manager in Surya Nagara (is) showing disregard to citizens," he said.

"I urge The Ministry of Finance and Department of Financial Services to mandate cultural and language sensitisation training. Respecting local language is respecting the people," he said, with the hashtag #KannadaFirst.*—PTI*

A NEW ERA

MA Saleem previously served in 26 key positions

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

MA Saleem, who took charge as Director-General and Inspector-General of Police (DG&IG) on Wednesday, has previously served in 26 key positions, ranging from SP of Udupi and Hassan districts to IGP (Eastern Range).

He was also the Police Commissioner of Mysuru city.

He took over as the 42nd DG&IG of Karnataka and is the third Muslim to head the top post after AR Nizamuddin in 1990 and Abdul Rahman Infant in 2012.

- MA Saleem who was appointed as the DG&IG is credited as masterminding Bengaluru's traffic reforms. He is the third Muslim to take the post

Saleem is a recipient of the President's Republic Day Police Medal for Distinguished Services in 2017, President's Republic Day Police Medal for Meritorious Services in 2009, and was awarded the Al-Ameen All India Community Leadership Award in 2023.

The front-runners for the DG&IG post included Prashant Kumar Thakur, Ramachandra Rao, whose tenure was clouded by a gold smuggling involving his step-daughter Ranya Rao, Malini Krishnamurthy, PK Mohanty, and Alok Kumar.

The selection for the DG &IG post is at the discretion of the Chief Minister and is based on merit rather than seniority *—Salar News*

Outgoing DGP Alok Mohan handing over the baton to the new DGP MA Saleem at the DGP office, on Wednesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

God and religion are not BJP's properties: DKS

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

A 19-year-old youth from BelHitting out at the BJP for appropriating religion, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar asked if God and dharma were the properties of the BJP. Speaking at an event commemorating the death anniversary of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, he said, "The BJP criticises whatever we do. They criticised us for planning Cauvery aarti in Sankey tank. Does BJP own God and dharma? We can't stop people from criticising but we will go ahead with our plans." Shivakumar said Rajiv Gandhi's death was irreplaceable loss. "It was Rajiv Gandhi who instructed Bangarappa to identify youth from all communities and give them representation in the Cabinet. That resulted in me becoming a minister".*—Salar News*

FIR against Insta handle posting women on metro

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

An FIR has been filed against unknown individuals for sharing photographs of female commuters on City's metro without their consent, said the Deputy Commissioner of Police, South Bengaluru.

The controversial Instagram account, called 'Bangalore Metro Chicks', had amassed over 5,000 followers before attracting police attention. It featured unsolicited images of women taken inside metro coaches and on station platforms, with no proof of consent.

The issue came to light after a user on X reported the account to Bengaluru City Police, urging action. Authorities swiftly registered an FIR under relevant legal provisions.

Police confirmed the photos were taken covertly,

without the women's knowledge. Following public outrage, all images were removed from the Instagram page.

"A case of voyeurism and under the Information Technology Act has been registered at Banashankari police station," said Lokesh B Jagalasar, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South). "An investigation is underway to trace the accused, the page handler, as well as the person who may have shot the videos. We will soon trace the accused and work towards creating a safe environment for women." *—PTI/ANI*

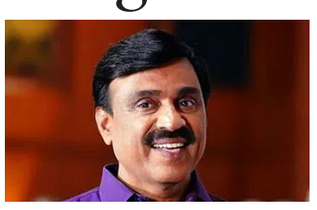
Reddy moves T'gana HC for bail

HYDERABAD, 21 MAY

Former Minister Gali Janardhana Reddy, recently convicted in an illegal iron ore mining case, has approached the Telangana High Court seeking bail and a suspension of the lower court's judgment.

On 6 May, the Special CBI Court in Hyderabad sentenced Reddy and others to seven years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 each.

The court found them guilty



Gali Janardhana Reddy *PHOTO: PTI*

of illegal mining between 2007 and 2009 in the Bellary Reserve Forest, on the Karnataka–Andhra Pradesh border, causing a loss of Rs 884 crore to the exchequer.

Reddy filed his petition in the High Court on Monday. Others convicted include his brother-in-law Srinivasa Reddy, Managing Director of Obulapuram Mining Company, VD Rajagopal, then Director of Mines and Geology, and Mehafuz Ali Khan, Reddy's personal assistant.

Reddy now seeks relief while appealing against the conviction in what was one of India's most significant mining scams. *—PTI*

Tension in Kolar over Ambedkar statue

KOLAR, 21 MAY

Tension prevailed at Chintamani and the police have clamped prohibitory orders under section 144 CrPC over removal of Ambedkar bust from the premises of a school building.

The Dalit Sangarsha Samithi and other Dalit organisations have called for a total bundh in Chintamani taluk on Thursday.

The bust was unofficially installed some ten months back in a government boys school in Chintamani. Dailt organisations have been pressing for its formal inauguration by the elected representatives. However, acting on a PIL, the court reportedly ordered removal of the bust saying norms prescribed in the Karnataka Municipal Act over installation of statues were not followed.

Based on the court directive the authorities took steps to remove the bust during wee hours of Wednesday. As the news of removal of the bust spread, various Dalit organisations began protesting against the district administration and demanded immediate restoration of the bust. *—Salar News*

FIR LODGED AGAINST ARNAB, BJP IT CELL CHIEF

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

An FIR was registered against BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya and Editor-in-Chief of Republic TV, Arnab Goswami for allegedly running false information, police said.

The case was registered at High Grounds police station on Tuesday, based on the complaint from the Indian Youth Congress's legal cell head Shrikant Swaroop BN under section 192 (wantonly giving provocation with an intent to cause riot) and 352 (Intentional insult to provoke breach of peace) of the BNS, they said.

Swaroop alleged that the accused have "maliciously propagated the fabricated claim" that the Istanbul Congress Centre in Turkey is the office of the Congress.

"Their calculated misuse of influence to spread falsehoods with criminal intent demands the harshest response," the complainant alleged. *—PTI*

Youth duped of ₹24 lakh over IPL slot offer

BELAGAVI, 21 MAY

A 19-year-old youth from Belagavi district was duped of Rs 24 lakh, promising to include him in the Rajasthan Royals team in the ongoing IPL tournament. Belagavi Superintendent of Police Bhimashankar Guled said Rakesh Yadure from Chinchali village in Chikkodi taluk participated in a state-level cricket tournament in Hyderabad in 2024. On 22 December, 2024, he received an Instagram message that the Rajasthan Royals team witnessed his batting and decided to add him to the team. Guled said the youth paid Rs 24 lakh in a few instalments till 20 May. *—Salar News*

RAISING STATE PRIDE

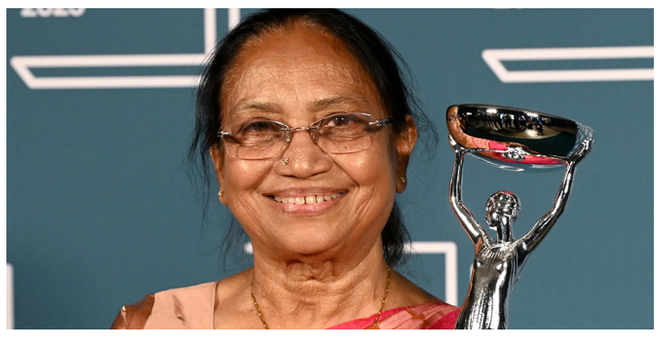
State celebrates Banu Mushtaq's Booker win

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

C Congratulatory messages poured in for writer Banu Mushtaq for winning the International Booker Prize for her Kannada short story collection. Many described it as a proud moment for all Kannadigas, saying her work spread the vibrancy of the language and its literature globally.

Writer, activist and lawyer Mushtaq's short story collection 'Hridaya Deepa' (Heart Lamp) has become the first Kannada title to win the coveted GBP 50,000 International Booker Prize in London.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar wrote on X "heartiest congratulations to



Author Banu Mushtaq *PHOTO: PTI*

Banu Mushtaq and Deepa Bhasti for translating this work into English.... Congratulations for raising the glory of Kannada literature to the skies!"

Union Minister and former chief minister Kumaraswamy similarly wrote, "may the Kannada literary world be enriched by her and may the flavour of Kannada spread across the world."

Similarly, Infosys Foundation founder-chairperson Sudha Murthy said the award is a double win for every Kannadiga woman. "As an Indian, I am happy. As a Kannada person, I am very happy. As an author I am very happy. And as a woman, I am even more happy," Murthy told PTI Videos.

State heartthrob, actor Namma Shivanna, aka Shiva Rajkumar, on X wrote "your achievement of introducing Kannada literature on a global scale and attracting the attention of the world is a great contribution to Kannada literature and heritage." *—PTI*

Six killed in road accident in Vijaypura

VIJAYPURA, 21 MAY

Six people, including five members of a family from Telanagana, were killed in a mishap involving a car, a private bus and a truck Wednesday morning, police said. The accident took place on the national highway near Managuli village of Vijaypura district.

Police said the victims included P Bhaskaran, the manager of a Canara Bank branch at Gadaval in Telanagana, his wife Pavitra, daughter Josthna, son Praveen Tej and bus driver Basavaraj Rathod from Kalaghtagi Tanda.

Bhaskaran and his family were heading toward Solhapur after visiting a few tourist

places in State. The car in which the family was travelling jumped the median and collided with the bus heading to Ballari from Mumbai, and the bus the rammed into a truck, police said.

The bus was heading toward Ballari from Mumbai.

Bhaskaran's 10-year-old son survived the accident and is undergoing treatment in a government hospital in Vijaypura

—Salar News with agencies

Delhi govt revokes order cancelling leaves of officials

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Delhi government on Wednesday revoked its order cancelling leaves of officials in the wake of the military conflict with Pakistan. The services department of Delhi government said its previous order dated 8 May cancelling all leaves of officers/officials stands withdrawn with immediate effect. In the order, the department cancelled leaves of all Delhi government employees until further orders to prepare for any emergency situation arising out of the hostilities between India and Pakistan following Operation Sindoor. The situation improved after a few days as the two countries on 10 May decided to halt the military action. India hit nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on 7 May as Operation Sindoor. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Drone-like objects spotted over Kolkata sky

KOLKATA, 21 MAY

Several drone-like objects were recently spotted hovering over the night sky in Kolkata, prompting the police to investigate the matter from all angles, including the possibility of espionage, officials said on Wednesday. At least 8-10 such objects were found flying over the Hastings area, the Vidyasagar Setu and Maidan on Monday night, they said. A senior bureaucrat in the state administration said the Centre has also sought a report from the West Bengal government over the incident. Personnel at the Hastings Police Station first spotted these flying objects having similarities with drones. The drone-like objects were also seen over Park Circus area in the eastern part of the metropolis before disappearing, he said. *—PTI*

Row erupts after Manipur's name covered on bus

IMPHAL, 21 MAY

BJP's Northeast in-charge Sambit Patra said Manipur's security forces allegedly stopping a government bus carrying journalists and concealing the state's name on its windshield was an "avoidable misunderstanding". Patra asserted that Manipur's integrity is non-negotiable. Security personnel had stopped the bus carrying journalists to cover the tourism festival of "Shirui Lily" at Gwaltabi check post in Imphal East district. They allegedly forced the Directorate of Information and Public Relations' staff to conceal the state's name on the top of the vehicle's windshield with a piece of white paper. Media organisations observed a "pen down strike" on Wednesday, boycotting all news related to the state government. *—PTI*

Sharmila launches hunger strike for contract workers

VISAKHAPATNAM, 21 MAY

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) President YS Sharmila on Wednesday joined a sit-in hunger strike here in support of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant contract workers, who were allegedly sacked by the plant's management. The Congress leader demanded the restoration of jobs for as many as 2,000 contract workers, who were allegedly sacked recently. "In support of workers at the VSP protest site, APCC chief YS Sharmila Reddy began an indefinite hunger strike," said a press release from the Congress party. Sharmila demanded the immediate restoration of jobs to the affected workers. Several Congress leaders and party cadres attended the protest in the port city. *—PTI*

India fumes as Pakistan blames it for bomb blast

5 people including 3 children were killed in the school bus blast

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal **PHOTO: PTI**

India on Wednesday trashed as "baseless" Pakistan's allegations that there was an Indian hand in a bomb attack on a school bus in Balochistan's Khuzdar region.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it has become "second nature" for Pakistan to blame India for all its internal issues in order to divert attention from its reputation as the "global epicenter" of terrorism.

This attempt to hoodwink the world is doomed to fail, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

At least five people, including three children, were killed and 38 others were injured in the suicide attack on Wednesday.

The attack targeted a school bus carrying students and teachers.

"India rejects the baseless allegations made by Pakistan regarding Indian involvement with the incident in Khuzdar," Jaiswal said.

India condoled the loss of lives in all such terror incidents.

"However, in order to divert attention from its reputation as the global epicenter of terrorism and to hide its own gross failings, it has become second nature for Pakistan to blame India for all its internal issues," Jaiswal said.

"This attempt to hoodwink the world is doomed to fail," he added.

Pakistan's Interior Ministry said the blast was allegedly carried out through a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack and expressed deep sorrow over the killing of innocent children and their teachers. Islamabad had alleged an Indian hand in the attack. *– PTI*

Centre sanctions CISF personnel for dam security

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Centre has sanctioned a contingent of 296 armed CISF personnel for providing a counter-terrorist security cover to Bhakra dam amid continuing standoff between Punjab and Haryana over sharing of water from dam, official sources said Wednesday. They said Union Home Ministry has directed that the force be deployed at the dam, located in Nangal along Punjab-Himachal Pradesh border, in view of threat perception reports by central intelligence and security agencies. The decision comes amid a dispute between Punjab and Haryana over sharing of its water. *– PTI*

RESPECT TO THE PM

A group of Muslim artisans in Agra created a stone mosaic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a mark of respect to Operation Sindoor **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: X @adgpi

Multi-party delegation leaves for Japan

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

A multi-party delegation led by JD (U) MP Sanjay Jha on Wednesday left for Japan to put across India's views on terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

The delegation will also visit South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore as part of New Delhi's outreach following Operation Sindoor and the subsequent conflict between India and Pakistan.

As many as nine terror camps were hit inside Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir by Indian forces to avenge the Pahalgam terror attack, which left at least 26 civilians dead.

The delegation led by Jha includes BJP MPs Aparajita Sarangi, Brijlal, Pradhan Barua and Hemang Joshi, Congress leader and former external affairs minister Salman Khurshid, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, CPI(M)'s John Brittas, and former ambassador Mohan Kumar.

Another delegation led by Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde will also leave for the UAE, Liberia, Congo and Sierra Leone later in the day.

The government is sending seven multi-party d elegations to reach out to the international community on Pakistan's designs and India's response to terror. *– PTI*

Operation Sindoor has sent a loud and clear message: India will strike deep and dismantle terror safe havens. We must come together to ensure that such infrastructure finds no shelter anywhere in the world

-Raghav Chadha, AAP Rajya Sabha MP

The BJP must answer who gave a clean chit to Mohammad Ali Jinnah and praised him? It was none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had gone to Lahore to break bread with Nawaz Sharif

-Jairam Ramesh, Congress General Secretary in-charge Communications

TN moves SC against Centre over education funds

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Tamil Nadu government has moved Supreme Court against Centre for allegedly withholding over Rs 2,151 crore in central education funds under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme for 2024–2025.

DMK government's plea, filed against the Union Ministry of Education, invokes Article 131 of the Constitution which provides exclusive jurisdiction to the top court to hear pleas between the Centre and one or more states, or between one or more states.

The state government alleged the Centre attempted to force the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the associated PM SHRI Schools Scheme which it strongly objected to, particularly the contentious three-language formula.

The top court, therefore, was urged to declared "the NEP and the PM SHRI Schools Scheme are not binding on the plaintiff state unless and until a formal agreement is entered into between the plaintiff and the defendant for their implementation within Tamil Nadu".

The lawsuit has also sought a declaration that the action of the Centre to link Tamil Nadu's entitlement to receive funds under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme to the implementation of the NEP, 2020, and the PM SHRI Schools Scheme within the state are "unconstitutional, illegal, arbitrary, unreasonable".

The plea, sought a direction to Centre to pay "Rs 2,291,30,24,769 within a time frame to be fixed by this court" along with a future interest of 6 per cent per annum on the "principal sum of Rs 2,151,59,61,000 from 1 May, 2025 until realisation of the decree". *– PTI*

Madras HC stayed appointment of TN's Vice Chancellor

CHENNAI, 21 MAY

The Madras High Court on Wednesday granted an interim stay for a specific provision that enables the Tamil Nadu government to appoint vice-chancellors to state-run varsities.

A Division Bench of Justices GR Swaminathan and V Lakshmi Narayanan granted the stay amid staunch opposition of the state government against taking up the case in haste.

An advocate, also an functionary of the BJP is the petitioner.

The provision of the Act for which the stay has been granted was originally among the Bills that were given deemed assent by the Supreme Court in the TN government vs the TN governor case. *– PTI*

Interim trade deal with US likely before 8 July

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

India and the US are likely to agree on an interim trade agreement before July 8 with New Delhi pushing for full exemption from the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on domestic goods, an official said.

The US on 2 April imposed an additional 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods but suspended it for 90 days till 9 July. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America remains in place.

The government official said India's endeavour to protect its sensitive sectors may entail some quota or minimum import price.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal was in Washington earlier this week to give an impetus to trade talks. He met with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick.

In a post on X, Goyal said that he held good discussions with the US Commerce Secretary towards expediting the first tranche of India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA).

At present, the Trump administration requires approval from the US Congress to bring tariffs below the most favoured nation (MFN) rates.

But the administration has the authority to remove the reciprocal tariffs imposed on a number of countries, including India.

India may look at certain commitments from the US on the duty concessions for its labour-intensive sector in the first tranche of the proposed BTA. *– PTI*

AMID ELECTIONS

Cong promises Rs 2,500 per month for Bihar's women

PATNA, 21 MAY

All India Mahila Congress President Alka Lamba addressing a press conference **PHOTO: ANI**

All India Mahila Congress Chief Alka Lamba on Wednesday announced that the women of Bihar will get a monthly stipend of Rs 2,500 if the Mahagathbandhan, of which her party is a constituent, comes to power in the state after the assembly polls due later this year.

Lamba made the promise during a press conference here, backing to the hilt the 'Mai Behan Maan' scheme which was visualised by her alliance partner Tejashwi Yadav of the RJD a few months ago.

"The NDA governments at the Centre as well as in the state are least bothered about the welfare of the people, especially women. But the Congress and the alliance partners of the Mahagathbandhan are concerned about them. If the Mahagathbandhan comes to power in the upcoming elections in Bihar, Rs 2,500 per month will be provided by the state government to women belonging to deprived sections," she said.

"We will implement this scheme immediately after forming the government, just like we did in Telangana, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh," she said.

Party leaders will distribute forms across the state for the scheme and those will be filled for the eligible women by the alliance workers, Lamba said.

The party issued a number – 8800023525 -- to which women can call for registration. *—PTI*

Sonia 'abused' position in AJL to benefit family: ED

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Sonia Gandhi,Rahul Gandhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi "abused" her position as the then AICC president for personal gains to herself and her son Rahul Gandhi by converting public money for self use through the Young Indian (YI) company, the ED is understood to have alleged in its chargesheet filed in the National Herald case.

Sources told PTI quoting the chargesheet that both the leaders have told the federal probe agency during recording of their statements in this case a few years back that they were "not aware" about the activities taking place at the YI and the Associated Journals Limited (AJL).

They are understood to have told the agency that all these affairs were taken care of by late Congress leader Motilal Vora as he was "empowered" to deal with the administrative and financial matters.

The chargesheet was filed on 9 April and the local court is yet to take its cognisance.

The chargesheet alleged that Sonia Gandhi "abused" her position as the then AICC President (2010-11) for "personal gain" of herself and her son Rahul Gandhi by "fraudulent" takeover of AJL by YI.

The ED has alleged that this "sham" transaction could not have been executed without her knowledge and active participation, being the President of the AICC and in-charge of affairs, according to sources.

On Rahul Gandhi, the ED chargesheet is understood to have alleged that he along with other accused "cheated" the shareholders of AJL and donors of AICC.

He was "knowingly" a party and/or actually involved in the process and activity connected with the proceeds of crime including acquisition, possession, concealment and using the proceeds of crime that are worth Rs 988 crore in this case, it is alleged.

The Congress has described the ED's chargesheet against the Gandhis as vendetta politics. *– PTI*

Ayodhya Ram Darbar consecration on 5 June

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The construction of the iconic Ram temple in Ayodhya will be completed by 5 June and the consecration of "Ram Darbar" will be performed in a ceremony beginning 3 June, according to Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Construction Committee Chairman Nripendra Misra.

Misra said that the "pran pratishtha" (consecration) ceremony, which is expected to be grand, will be held on 5 June. However, the guest list is expected to be different this time, he added.

The consecration of Ram Lalla (child Ram) was held on 22 January last year in a ceremony led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The seven temples include those of sages Vashistha, Valmiki, Agastya, Vishwamitra, Ahalya, Shabari and Nishadraj.

Asked about the new additions to the temple, Misra explained that there are three phases in which the temple has been constructed.

The idols of Ram Darbar have been crafted by artisans in Jaipur using Makrana marble found in Rajasthan. *—PTI*

Employees retiring before hike get notional increment

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The Central government has announced that employees retiring a day before their annual pay increment date will receive a notional increment for pension calculation. This follows a Supreme Court ruling on 20 February 2025. Employees retiring on 30 June or 31 December, just before the usual increment dates of 1 July or 1 January, and who have completed the required service with satisfactory conduct, will benefit. The increment will only affect pension calculations, not other benefits. Another directive states that one increment is payable from 1 May 2023, but no enhanced pension will be paid for periods before 30 April 2023. Around 4.87 million Central government employees are impacted. The All India NPS Employees Federation welcomed the decision. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

NCW takes suo motu action on sexual harassment

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report alleging sexual coercion and harassment involving a youth wing office bearer of the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu. The accusations, reportedly made by the accused's wife, claim he forced girls to "sleep with politicians." NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar described the allegations as "disturbing" and of a "grave nature," writing to the TN Director General of Police to demand an immediate, impartial, and transparent investigation. The NCW stressed the need to protect the survivor, form an independent investigative team and prevent political interference. It has also urged the TN police to register a case and submit an Action Taken Report with a copy of the FIR within three days. *—Agencies*

Drunk man kills 85-year-old mom in Kerala

T'PURAM, 21 MAY

An 85-year-old woman was allegedly killed by her son while he was under the influence of alcohol in southern Kerala, police reported on Wednesday. The victim, Omana, a resident of Thekkada near Nedumangad, was rushed to the Government Medical College Hospital but succumbed to her injuries. Police said the accused, Manikandan, was heavily intoxicated at the time of the incident, which took place on Tuesday night. He reportedly assaulted his mother brutally, stomping on her and causing multiple fractures across her body. Omana was in critical condition when admitted to hospital. Police said Manikandan is currently being questioned. *—PTI*

Two tiger cub carcasses found in Corbett reserve

RISHIKESH, 21 MAY

The decomposed carcasses of two six-month-old tiger cubs were discovered in the Kalagarh range of the Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, officials confirmed on Wednesday. Forest staff came across the remains on either side of a water body while patrolling on Tuesday and promptly informed their seniors. Deputy Director Rahul Mishra arrived at the scene to collect samples in accordance with National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines. Corbett Tiger Reserve Director Saket Badola stated that it appears the cubs were killed by another tiger that had entered the area, a natural behaviour among tigers related to territoriality and dominance. The incident highlights the harsh realities of life in the wild, where such actions are part of the species' instinctive survival strategies. *—PTI*

'Nobody can claim govt land under Waqf'

Centre defends Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 in SC; says Waqf is a secular concept

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The Centre on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that nobody can claim right over government land and it is legally empowered to reclaim properties declared Waqf by using the "Waqf by user" principle.

Waqf by user refers to a concept where a property is recognised as Waqf based on its long-term use for religious or charitable purposes, even without formal documentation.

Before a bench comprising Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta representing the Centre said that nobody had the right to government land.

The law officer said, "It is nobody's case that Parliament does not have the competence to pass this legislation."

He referred to the report of the joint parliamentary committee and that many state governments and state Waqf Boards were consulted before the Act came into being.

The bench sought response from the Centre on the pleas that an officer above the rank of the district collector can decide the claim over Waqf properties on the grounds that they are of government.

The hearing in the case is underway.

The Centre strongly defended the Act, saying waqf by its very nature is a "secular concept" and can't be stayed as there is a "presumption of constitutionality" in its favour.

The law sought to regulate secular aspects of Waqf administration while safeguarding religious freedom. The Centre had urged the bench to confine the hearing on pleas to three issues. The Centre notified the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 in April. *—PTI*

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said it is nobody's case that Parliament does not have the competence to pass this legislation PHOTO: PTI

- Waqf by user refers to a concept where a property is recognised as waqf based on its long-term use for religious or charitable purposes

SC refuses to hear plea for FIR against Justice Varma

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to hear a plea seeking an FIR against high court judge Yashwant Varma in connection with the discovery of cash from his official residence.

"Before seeking the writ of mandamus, the petitioner will have to seek redressal of their grievance by filing representation..." the bench said.

After an in-house inquiry panel indicted Varma, former CJI Sanjiv Khanna nudged him to resign.

Khanna wrote to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi after Justice Varma refused to resign. *—PTI*

SC grants advance bail to Khedkar

New Delhi, 21 May

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted anticipatory bail to former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, accused of cheating and wrongly availing OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination. "She is not a drug lord or a terrorist," said the two-judge bench. *—PTI*

Lawyers want vacation but judiciary blamed for backlog:CJI

New Delhi, 21 May

Chief Justice of India BR Gavai on Wednesday said lawyers do not want to work during vacation, but the judiciary is blamed for the backlog. The bench of the CJI and Justice Augustine George Masih was urged for the listing of a petition after the summer vacation. "The first five judges are sitting through the vacation, yet we are blamed for the backlog. In reality, it is the lawyers who are unwilling to work during the vacations," the CJI said. *—PTI*

27 Naxalites killed in Chhattisgarh

NARAYANPUR, 21 MAY

27 Naxalites have been killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, with sources claiming that top Maoist leader Basavaraju was among them.

A member of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) was also killed in action while some others sustained injuries.

Sources claimed that Nambala Keshava Rao alias Basavaraju, the general secretary of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) who was in his late 60s, was among the slain Maoists, though not confirmed officially.

The encounter took place in dense forests of Abhujmad on the tri-junction of Narayanpur-Bijapur-Dantewada districts.

The operation involving personnel of DRG from Narayanpur, Dantewada, Bijapur, and Kondagaon was launched two days ago based on intelligence inputs about the presence of Central Committee and Politburo members of the Maoists and senior Maad Division cadres and PLGA (Peoples' Liberation Guerilla Army) members.

The search operation was still underway.

200 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year. Of them, 183 were eliminated in the Bastar division which includes districts of Bijapur, Narayanpur, Dantewada and Kondagaon. *—PTI*

The encounter took place in dense forests of Abhujmad on the tri-junction of Narayanpur-Bijapur-Dantewada districts PHOTO: ANI

Basavaraju had ₹1.5 crore bounty on his head

Basavaraju was influential and strategized some of India's deadliest Maoist attacks, including the 2010 Dante wada massacre, which killed 75 CRPF jawans. He had a bounty of Rs 1.5 crore on his head.

As the commander-in-chief of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of CPI (Maoist) he supervised ambushes, tactical operations and military strategies. He had led the Dandakaranya forest division, a Maoist stronghold. *—PTI*

ED conducts multi-city raids in PMLA case

KOLKATA, 21 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted search operations in multiple cities, including Mumbai, Bengaluru, Jalandhar, Indore and Kolkata, in connection with its probe into alleged money laundering in a firm.

The searches were carried out under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, the agency said in a social media post.

During the search operations, the ED seized foreign currencies, including US Dollars, Singapore Dollars and Dirhams, amounting to around Rs 6.43 lakh, gold bullion worth Rs 55.74 lakh, and froze bank accounts with a total balance of around Rs 94 lakh, it said.

Property documents, several digital devices, and various incriminating documents were also seized, the agency added. *—PTI*

- During the search operations, the ED seized foreign currencies, including US Dollars, Singapore Dollars and Dirhams, amounting to around Rs 6.43 lakh, gold bullion worth Rs 55.74 lakh, and froze bank accounts with a total balance of around Rs 94 lakh, officials said

HC raps commentator Mitra for slur on women journalists

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday rapped commentator Abhijit Iyer Mitra for his alleged defamatory and abusive social media posts against nine women journalists of media house Newslaundry and asked him to remove the posts within five hours.

"Such a language and words are not permissible in a civilised society. First you remove the posts then we will hear you," Justice Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav told Mitra's counsel.

The court was hearing a plea by nine women journalists, who work with Newslaundry and sought an injunction and damages of Rs 2 crore from Mitra for his "defamatory, false, malicious and unsubstantiated allegations" published on X. *—PTI*

Term 'bouncer' intended to invoke fear, says HC

CHANDIGARH, 21 MAY

Expressing concern over the use of the term "bouncer" by private security agencies for their workers, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has observed that it is intended to invoke "fear, anxiety and terror in the minds of the public", which is "impermissible" in any civilised setup.

It also observed that the reason for engaging the services of a security agency or security guards is to ensure a safe and respectful space, but when these employers or employees assume themselves to be extra-constitutional authorities, it becomes a cause of grave concern for the society.

The HC was hearing a plea seeking anticipatory bail filed by a person running a private security agency.

Justice Anoop Chitkara observed that the paramount concern for the court was the use of the term "bouncer" in the name of the security agency run by the petitioner.

The bench referred to a "disturbing trend", wherein a particular segment of employers and employees, under the guise of a simple job description "bouncer", have started adopting a "terrorising and bullying role". *—PTI*

TAX EVASION

HC quashes warrant against Arjun Rampal

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

The Bombay High Court has quashed a local court order issuing a non-bailable warrant against actor Arjun Rampal in a 2019 tax evasion case, terming the order "mechanical and cryptic".

The court said that magistrate's order was "contrary to law" and passed without application of mind.

Rampal had moved HC challenging the 9 April order passed by a magistrate's court issuing a non-bailable warrant against him in a 2019 case initiated by the I-T department for an offence under section 276C(2) of the Income Tax Act.

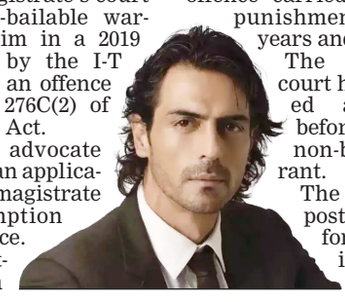
The actor's advocate had submitted an application before the magistrate seeking exemption from appearance. The court rejected it, issuing a non-bailable warrant against Rampal.

Justice Sethna noted that the offence carried a maximum punishment of three years and is bailable.

The magistrate's court had not recorded any reasons before issuing the non-bailable warrant.

The high court posted the matter for further hearing on June 16. *—PTI*

- Rampal had moved HC challenging the 9 April order passed by a magistrate's court issuing a non-bailable warrant against him in a 2019 case initiated by the I-T department



Himachal board to recheck Class 12 paper

SHIMLA, 21 MAY

The Himachal Pradesh Board of School Education (HPBOSE) will re-evaluate the marks for its Class 12 English exam after a "human error" was found in the compilation of results.

The paper, originally held on 8 March, had been cancelled and rescheduled for 29 March. This was because teachers at the Government Senior Secondary School in Chowari, Chamba district, mistakenly opened the Class 12 question paper a day early, thinking it was the Class 10 paper.

After the Class 12 results were announced on Saturday, the board received numerous complaints from students who had scored lower than expected in English. An inquiry found that the incorrect answer keys for the cancelled paper had been uploaded due to human error, causing the discrepancies. The board has accepted the mistake and will re-evaluate the papers. *—PTI*

FIVE-YEAR SURGE

Gujarat's lion population grows to 891

GANDGINAGAR, 21 MAY

The estimated population of Asiatic lions in Gujarat has increased to 891 from 674 five years as per the census conducted this month.

Apart from the count increasing by 217, the animals were found outside the Gir National Park, their traditional habitat and spread across 11 districts of Saurashtra including non-forested and coastal areas.

According to the 2020 census, the population of Asiatic lions, a subspecies only found in Gujarat's Gir area, was estimated at 674.

The latest census estimated 196 males, 330 females, 140 sub-adults and 225 cubs, said the Gujarat forest department.

As many as 384 lions were counted in Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary and 507 were found outside its limits, including sanctuaries like Pania, Mitiyala, Girnar and Barda. Some animals were seen in non-forested areas and coastal areas too, said Jaipal Singh, principal chief conservator of forest.

17 lions were counted in Barda sanctuary, 15 km from Porbandar.

The highest number of lions recorded in a single pride was 17 in Bhavnagar district, official said.

The 16th Asiatic lion census, a four-day exercise, was conducted from 10 May to 13 in two phases in 11 districts.

The census was conducted through a more accurate method called 'direct beat verification', which provides 100 percent accuracy with almost zero margin of error due to statistical analysis and ease of implementation.

A lion census is conducted every five years by the state Forest Department.

Volunteers recorded details such as time of observation, direction of movement, sex, age, any other identifying marks on the body and GPS location among others.

Hi-tech tools like camera traps and high resolution cameras and radio-collars were used for the identification of lions. *—PTI*

Gujarat forest department said the latest census estimated 196 males, 330 females, 140 sub-adults and 225 cubs PHOTO: X

Marathwada seeks drones for emergency announcements

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 21 MAY

Ahead of the rainy season, police in Maharashtra's Marathwada division have requested for drones to make emergency announcements in villages located along rivers, an official said on Wednesday.

Major rivers such as the Godavari, Purna, Dudhna, Penganga, Manjara and Terna flow through Marathwada, which covers Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Jalna, Parbhani, Hingoli, Nanded, Beed, Latur and Dharashiv districts.

Several villages in the region have experienced flooding since 2005, the official added, noting efforts are underway to ensure residents' safety during disasters. The police in each district are also members of the district disaster management committees. "During emergencies or floods, police need to reach villages to issue public warnings. In some villages, a 'dawandi' (special drum announcements) is also used," the official said.

The department aims to adopt technology to improve the efficiency of such alerts. "Reaching villages during the monsoon can be difficult and time-consuming, which is why drones have been requested for public announcements," said Divisional Commissioner Dilip Gawde. *—PTI*

NEPAL EVEREST SPEED

Four British climbers posed on the summit of Mount Everest in Nepal on Wednesday, achieving one of the fastest recorded ascents of the world's highest peak. Accompanied by a renowned guide, the team reached the summit in less than a week after departing from London. Their preparation included inhaling xenon gas in Germany and sleeping in high-altitude simulation tents at home

PHOTO: – PTI

Banu Mushtaq reflects Karnataka's social fabric

INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE

Heart Lamp shines global light on Southern India's rich literary traditions ***PHOTO: PTI***

In a historic moment for regional Indian literature, Kannada writer and women's rights activist Mushtaq has been awarded the 2025 International Booker Prize for her short story collection "Heart Lamp", translated into English by Bhasthi. The win marks the first time a Kannada work has received such global recognition, putting the spotlight on the rich literary traditions of southern India.

In an interview to the International Booker Prize, the author said the "social conditions of Karnataka" shaped her.

The women's rights activist based in Hassan in Karnataka began writing within the progressive protest literary circles in southwestern India in the 1970s and 1980s as part of the Bandaya Sahitya Movement. She rose to prominence during the rebel literary movement critical of the caste and class system.

Born in Hassan to progressive parents - her father was a senior health inspector and her mother a homemaker - Mushtaq also worked as a journalist with Lankesh Patrike for a while before doing her law degree.

She is still a practicing lawyer with a team working with her from her home in Hassan and regularly goes to court.

"I am not very conscious about it, but I know I am a Muslim woman and how to work under those identities... My parents were liberal and educated. My father wanted all his children to be highly educated. My husband is also very cooperative. My family doesn't impose anything on us," she told PTI after her book was shortlisted for the International Booker Prize.

She said she started writing when she was just seven or eight. "My father brought me a lot of books... I was a voracious reader. I would read them and I would mash up everything and make stories and tell my father," Mushtaq said.

Author of six short story collections, a novel, an essay collection and a poetry collection, Mushtaq writes only in Kannada and has won major awards for her literary works, including the Karnataka Sahitya Academy and the Daana Chintamani Attimabbe awards.

One of her stories, "Hasina", was adapted for cinema by director Girish Kasaravalli in 2004 and went on to win multiple National Awards.

"The 1970s was a decade of movements in Karnataka - the Dalit movement, farmers' movement, language movement, rebellion movement, women's struggles, environmental activism, and theatre, activities among others, had a profound impact on me. My direct engagement with the lives of marginalised communities, women, and the neglected, along with their expressions, gave me the strength to write," she said.

Through her characters - the spirited children, the audacious grandmothers, the buffoonish maulvis and thug brothers, the oft-hapless husbands, and the mothers above all, surviving their feelings at great cost - Mushtaq emerges an observer of human nature.

"In a world that often tries to divide us, literature remains one of the lost sacred spaces where we can live inside each other's minds, if only for a few pages," she said.

The International Booker celebrates the best works of long-form fiction or collections of short stories translated into English and published in the UK and/or Ireland. It is different from the Booker Prize that was earlier confined to Commonwealth writers and is now open to all writers in English.

With the award, Mushtaq's works have found a whole new audience beyond her Kannada readers and also beyond India to the globe.

The stories in "Heart Lamp" were selected and curated by Bhasthi, who was keen to preserve the multilingual nature of southern India. A translation of Mushtaq's stories by Bhasthi also won the English PEN's PEN Translates award in 2024.

Max Porter, International Booker Prize 2025 chair of judges, described the winning title as something genuinely new for English readers.

The accolades were fulsome, from friends, family and a host of authors and political leaders.

Her husband Mushtaq Moinuddin and son Tahir Mushtaq were thrilled.

Each shortlisted title is awarded a prize of GBP 5,000, shared between the author and translator. The winning prize money of GBP 50,000 will be split between Mushtaq and Bhasthi. *– PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Released Israeli-American soldier's path to healing

For two days after Israeli-American soldier Edan Alexander was released from 19 months of captivity in Gaza, he couldn't eat anything. Despite periods of near starvation while being held by Hamas militants, Alexander just didn't have an appetite.

Then, his mother, Yael Alexander, put a burger and fries in front of him, and her son dove in.

It was one of many joyful moments his family has experienced since learning he would be freed.

Hamas portrayed the release of Edan, the last living American hostage in Gaza, as a gesture to President Donald Trump ahead of his Mideast tour last week, which the militants hoped would revive ceasefire talks. Instead, Israel launched a renewed offensive days later that families of the remaining hostages fear could put their loved ones in grave danger.

Edan's father was somewhat heartened by Israel's announcement Monday that some aid was going into Gaza for the first time in 2 and half months.

He urged Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to "rise above politics to prioritise human life."

The family had just finished celebrating Mother's Day at their home in New Jersey when Adi Alexander saw eight missed calls from Steve Witkoff, Trump's Mideast envoy. Witkoff told them to turn on the TV because Hamas was about to announce their son would be released.

"We were freaking out," he said. The family raced to book flights to Israel. Edan's mother travelled with Trump's hostage negotiator, Adam Boehler. His father and the couple's other two children arrived just minutes before Edan crossed into Israel from Gaza.

Edan was one of 251 people kidnapped during Hamas' 7 October, 2023, attack on Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Hamas is still holding 58 hostages, around a third of them believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefires or other deals. Israeli forces have rescued eight hostages alive and recovered more than 40 bodies.

The lowest point of his 584 days of captivity, Edan told his parents, was being dragged into Gaza and pushed into a tunnel. For hours, he was held alone underground until 10 other hostages were thrust in with him.

His father said his son's biggest fear was being kidnapped alone, like an Israeli soldier captured in Gaza in 2006, who was held for years until he was released in a 2011 exchange for more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Edan told his parents he was kept mostly underground and moved frequently between tunnels with other hostages. There was very little food, and he rarely saw sunlight or was able to breathe fresh air.

The 6-foot-tall Alexander dropped to around 60kg from around 80kg. Adi said the family is beyond grateful to Trump and American officials who worked tirelessly to free their son.

He lived in Maryland as a young child and graduated from high school in Tenafly, New Jersey. He moved to Israel in 2022 and volunteered for the Israeli army.

The day after Alexander's release, American officials Boehler and Witkoff visited what's come to be known as Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, meeting with families of those held in Gaza.

Hostage families said they left the meeting optimistic there would be more releases. But Trump ended a whirlwind trip through three Gulf countries without additional announcements, and Israel renewed its military campaign on Saturday, dashing hopes for immediate releases.

Alexander's parents said as soon as they catch their breath the family will resume the fight to win the hostages' release.

Edan returned weak and pale, but his parents say they see him gaining strength each day.

The hamburger two days after his release was a turning point.

For now, Edan is back in the room in his grandmother's apartment in Tel Aviv where he stayed during breaks from the army before his abduction.

He's reconnected with some hostages, including Sagui Dekel Chen, an American-Israeli who was released during the previous ceasefire. He's visiting with old friends from the army and New Jersey, squeezing in doctor's appointments between hanging out with his siblings.

There are quiet moments that have stuck out to his mother over the past week, when he does normal things, like scrolling through Spotify. Seeing her three children together. Simply being able to touch him, hug him.

It's a long path to recovery, but there are moments of bliss, like seeing him share a beer with his sister on the hospital rooftop. It was his first "legal" beer, since he turned 21 in captivity, a rite of passage since that's the legal drinking age in US. *– PTI*

Hostage release sparks hope, but renewed fighting threatens others ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Musk retreats from politics, after last big investment flop

- Elon Musk's heavy spending in Wisconsin's Supreme Court race failed, causing his political influence to wane and prompting him to reduce future campaign spending amid growing opposition.

Musk's millions fail to sway Wisconsin voters in historic US Supreme Court defeat ***PHOTO: X @ELON_MUSK12336***

Wisconsin could go down as billionaire Elon Musk's last big spend on a political campaign.

And it was a flop.

Musk, the richest person in the world, said Tuesday that he would be spending less on political campaigns.

The announcement came as Musk is stepping back from his role in the Trump administration, saying he will spend more time focused on his businesses, and just seven weeks after the candidate he backed in Wisconsin's Supreme Court race lost by 10 per cent points.

Democrats in the swing state said Musk's comments show that a party-led effort in this spring's election, dubbed "People vs. Musk," succeeded in making Musk and his money "toxic."

"The people have won," said Wisconsin Democratic Party Chairman Ben Wikler.

"The biggest funder in Republican politics is taking his toys and going home."

Brandon Scholz, a retired longtime Republican strategist in the state, said that at least in Wisconsin, "after that court race he deserves to be labelled as toxic."

But that doesn't mean Musk couldn't spend money on races in the state and nationally again, especially if the stakes are high and his money could make a difference, Scholz said.

Musk's spending in this year's Wisconsin Supreme Court race helped make it the most expensive court race in US history.

And it came just five months after Musk spent at least USD 250 million to help President Donald Trump win, reversing losses in Wisconsin and other battleground states four years earlier.

Musk was all-in on the Wisconsin Supreme Court race, even making a personal appearance in Green Bay the weekend before the election wearing a cheesehead hat — popular with fans of the NFL's Green Bay Packers — and personally handing out checks for USD 1 million to supporters.

It was an extension of Musk's high-profile role in the presidential race, where he campaigned alongside Trump and headlined some of his own rallies.

The candidate Musk backed lost Brown County, the home of Green Bay, by 3 per cent points, going on to lose statewide by more than three times that margin.

After the defeat, he has said little publicly about the race and his involvement in it. His popularity has also plummeted.

Musk's involvement in the race came at the same time he was the chain-saw-wielding face of the Trump administration's effort to downsize the federal government.

Democratic US rep Mark Pocan, of Wisconsin, is one of the most liberal members of Congress and a loud critic of both Trump and Musk.

Pocan is sceptical that Musk truly will back away.

"In Wisconsin, he had such a huge, huge, huge profile," Scholz said. "He became the campaign. He became the story."

Musk spent at least USD 3 million on the Wisconsin Supreme Court race himself. Musk-backed groups America PAC and a Rebuilding America's Future spent another USD 19 million in support of the Republican-backed candidate Brad Schimel.

That was part of more than USD 100 million spent on both sides.

In addition to his political contributions, Musk paid three individual voters USD 1 million each for signing a petition in an effort to goose turnout.

Musk also offered to pay USD 20 to anyone who signed up on his group's site to knock on doors for Schimel and posted a photo of themselves as proof.

Musk himself hosted Schimel on his podcast and cast what was at stake in stark terms.

Coincidentally, Musk's announcement about spending less on political races came just hours after a liberal judge announced her candidacy for the 2026 Wisconsin Supreme Court race. *– PTI*

PHOTO: X

Rapper Kid Cudi likely to testify at Diddy's trial

NEW YORK, 21 MAY

Rapper and actor Kid Cudi is expected to testify at the Sean "Diddy" Combs sex trafficking trial, taking the witness stand either on Wednesday or Thursday to tell the jury about his brief relationship 14 years ago with R&B singer Cassie, Combs' ex-girlfriend. Cassie testified last week that Combs was enraged when she left him for a period of time in 2011 and began dating Cudi, whose legal name is Scott Mescudi. She said Combs left a large bruise on her back where he kicked her as she left his Los Angeles home for the last time that year. Prosecutors have contended in court filings that Combs was so upset that he arranged to have Cudi's convertible firebombed. *—PTI*

UK inflation at year's highest on domestic bills hike

LONDON, 21 MAY

Inflation in the UK spiked to its highest level for more than a year in April amid a raft of higher domestic bills, such as energy and water, official figures showed Wednesday. The Office for National Statistics said that its key measure of inflation, as measured by the consumer prices index, rose by 3.5 per cent in the year to April, up from 2.6 per cent in March. April's rate was the highest since January 2024 and above expectations for a more modest increase to 3.3 per cent. The scale of the rise was also the largest since October 2022, at the height of the energy crisis in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Economists had anticipated a sizeable increase as April saw hefty annual price rises. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Jim Morrison's stolen bust found 40 years later

PARIS, 21 MAY

Police have found a bust of Jim Morrison that was stolen nearly four decades ago from the Paris grave that has long been a place of pilgrimage for fans of the legendary Doors singer and poet. The bust taken in 1988 from Père-Lachaise cemetery was found during an unrelated investigation conducted by a financial anti-corruption unit, Paris police said on Instagram Monday. There was no immediate word on whether the bust would be returned to the grave. The 300-pound bust made by Croatian sculptor Mladen Mikulin was added to the grave in 1981 for his 10th death anniversary. *—PTI*

3rd man charged over fires at UK PM Starmer's home

LONDON, 21 MAY

A third suspect has been charged with arson over a series of fires targeting property linked to UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, police said Wednesday. Petro Pochynok, 34, has been charged with conspiracy to commit arson with intent to endanger life. The Ukrainian national is scheduled to appear at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court on Wednesday morning. Two other men have already been charged with setting fire to Starmer's personal home, along with a property where he once lived and a car he had sold. They are Ukrainian national Roman Lavrynovych, 21, and Romanian national Stanislav Carpiuc, 26. No injuries were reported from the fires, which occurred on three nights in north London between 8 and 12 May. *—PTI*

Trump plans $175B Golden Dome for US

The President picked concept for space missile defence system; vows completion by 2029

WASHINGTON, 21 MAY

US President Donald Trump announced the concept he wants for his future Golden Dome missile defence programme — a multilayered, USD 175 billion system that will put US weapons in space.

Trump said on Tuesday he expects the system will be "fully operational before the end of my term (2029)," and have the capability of intercepting missiles "even if they are launched from space".

Trump also announced that General Michael Guetlein, the Vice Chief of Space Operations, will be responsible for overseeing Golden Dome's progress.

Golden Dome is envisioned to include ground- and space-based capabilities that are able to detect and stop missiles at all four major stages of a potential attack: detecting and destroying them before a launch, intercepting in earliest stage of flight, stopping them midcourse, or halting them in the final minutes as they descend toward a target.

Golden Dome's added satellites and interceptors — where the bulk of the programme's cost is — would be focused on stopping missiles early on or in the middle of their flight

The Pentagon has said that the newest missiles developed by China and Russia are so advanced that updated countermeasures are necessary. In a joint statement earlier this month, China and Russia called the Golden Dome idea "deeply destabilising in nature," warning it would turn "outer space into an environment for placing weapons and an arena for armed confrontation."

However, there is no money for the project yet, and Golden Dome overall is "still in the conceptual stage," newly confirmed Air Force Secretary Troy Meink told Senators during a hearing Tuesday.

While the President picked the concept he wanted, the Pentagon is still developing the requirements that Golden Dome will need to meet – which is not the way systems are normally developed. *—PTI*

Trump also announced that General Michael Guetlein, the Vice Chief of Space Operations, will be responsible for overseeing Golden Dome's progress **PHOTO: X**

TRUMP'S CHANGING NUMBERS ON WHAT THE MIDDLE EAST INVESTED

Trump has been steadily increasing the amount he says countries in the Mideast pledged to invest in the US.

Thursday: Trump said, "we just took in USD 4 trillion."

Friday: A White House statement said Trump's first official trip locked in over USD 2 trillion.

Monday: "We brought back about USD 5.1 trillion," Trump said. "And, it's being credited as one of the most successful visit that anybody's ever made to any place."

Tuesday: "They're spending USD 5.1 trillion, probably it's going to be USD 7 trillion by the time we stop," Trump said.

HOW MUCH WAS CONFIRMED?

The White House explained the USD 2.24 trillion in its Friday statement. It included $600 billion from Saudi Arabia, announced in January. There would also be a USD 1.2 trillion economic exchange with Qatar, as well as USD 243.5 billion in commercial and defense deals with that country. The UAE committed to USD 200 billion.

US ignores court order in deporting migrants

WASHINGTON, 21 MAY

The Trump administration begun deporting people from Myanmar and Vietnam to South Sudan despite a court order restricting removals to other countries, attorneys for the migrants said in court documents.

A federal judge then ruled late Tuesday that US officials must retain custody and control of the migrants apparently removed to South Sudan, in case he orders their removals were unlawful.

US District Judge Brian E Murphy in Massachusetts ordered an emergency hearing for Wednesday. The Department of Homeland Security and the White House, however, did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Immigration authorities may have sent up to a dozen people from several countries to Africa, lawers told a judge.

The removal of one man from Myanmar was confirmed in an email from an immigration official in Texas, according to court documents. Similarly, a woman also reported that her husband from Vietnam and up to 10 other people were flown to Africa Tuesday morning, attorneys from the National Immigration Litigation Alliance wrote. *—PTI*

Hegseth orders new review of Afg withdrawal

Washington, 20 May

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered another review of the US military's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, and of the suicide bombing at the Kabul airport that killed 13 American troops and 170 Afghans. US President Donald Trump and Hegseth have repeatedly blasted the Biden administration for the withdrawal, which Hegseth said was "disastrous and embarrassing."

He said that the new review will "get the truth." *—PTI*

Smoke rises after an Israeli airstrike in Gaza on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Israel lays siege on 2 hospitals in Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, 21 MAY

Two of northern Gaza's last functioning hospitals have been surrounded by Israeli troops, preventing anyone from leaving or entering the facilities, hospital staff and aid groups said this week, as Israel pursued its renewed offensive into the devastated Palestinian territory. At least 45 people were killed in Israeli overnight strikes, hospitals said.

The Indonesian hospital and al-Awda hospital are among the region's only surviving medical centres.

Israeli authorities issued evacuation orders Friday for large parts of northern Gaza ahead of attacks intended to pressure the Hamas militant group to release more hostages. New evacuation orders followed on Tuesday.

Both hospitals as well as another and three primary health care centres are within the evacuation zone, though Israel has not ordered the evacuation of the facilities themselves.

Another two hospitals and four primary care centres are within a 1,000 metres (yards) of the zone, said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the World Health Organisation.

Israeli military operations and evacuation orders "are stretching the health system beyond the breaking point", he said.

The WHO said hospitals in northern Gaza are "at a serious risk of shutting down completely". It has documented nearly 700 attacks on health care facilities in Gaza since the start of Israel's 19-month war against the Hamas militant group.*—PTI*

FEAR OF ISRAELI ATTACK ON IRAN RAISES ASIAN SHARES, OIL PRICES

HONG KONG, 21 MAY

Shares rose in Asia on Wednesday while oil prices jumped more than USD 1.20 a barrel following a report that Israel may be planning an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities.

Oil prices surged after a report cited unnamed intelligence officials saying Israel may be preparing for an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities. Oil prices tend to rise with conflicts that might disrupt oil supplies. US benchmark crude oil gained USD 1.21 to USD 63.24 per barrel while Brent crude, the international standard, rose USD 1.20 to USD 66.58 per barrel. In talks on the nuclear issue, Iranian officials have warned they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels. *—PTI*

Putin visits Kursk for the first time since regaining control

MOSCOW, 21 MAY

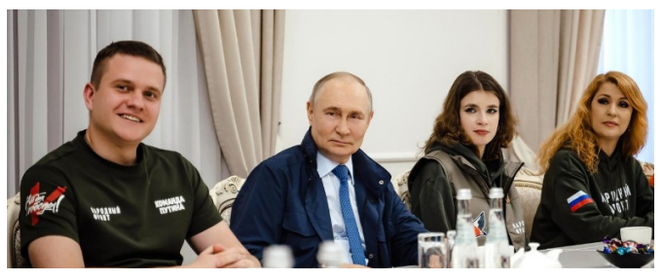
President Vladimir Putin visited Russia's Kursk region for the first time since Moscow claimed that it drove Ukrainian forces out of the area last month, the Kremlin said Wednesday.

Ukrainian forces made a surprise incursion into Kursk in August 2024 in one of their biggest battlefield successes in the three-year war. The incursion was the first time Russian territory was occupied by an invader since World War II and dealt a humiliating blow to the Kremlin.

Kyiv's strategy aimed to show that Russia has weaknesses and that the war isn't lost.

Ukraine, the US and South Korea said that North Korea sent up to 12,000 troops to help the Russian army regain control of Kursk, and Russia said on 26 April that its forces had pushed out the Ukrainian army.

Putin's visit appeared to be an effort to show Russia is in control of the conflict – even though its full-scale invasion has been slow and costly in terms of casualties and equipment. Video broadcast by Russian state media showed that Putin visited the under-construction Kursk Nuclear Power Plant-2. *—PTI*



Putin visited the under-construction Kursk Nuclear Power Plant-2
PHOTO: RUSSIAN PRESIDENT PRESS OFFICE/TASS/PROFIMEDIA

Adviser to former Ukrainian president shot dead in Spain

MADRID, 21 MAY

Spanish authorities said that an adviser to former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych was shot dead outside a school in Madrid on Wednesday. Andrii Portnov, 52, was identified as the victim by Spain's Interior Ministry. Witnesses said Portnov was shot "several times" in the head and body by multiple gunmen when he was getting into a vehicle, police said. The assailants fled on foot into a wooded area, police said.

Portnov was widely viewed as a pro-Russia political figure and was involved in drafting legislation aimed at persecuting participants of the 2014 revolution in Ukraine. He fled to Russia in 2014 before relocating to Austria. *—PTI*

5 indigenous groups in Colombia face extinction: UN

BOGOTA, 21 MAY

The United Nations human rights office in Colombia warned on Tuesday that five Indigenous groups in a storied mountain range face "physical and cultural" extinction, a critical threat that stems from armed groups fighting over their territory and insufficient state protection.

Scott Campbell, Colombia's representative for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, urged the Colombian government to protect the Kogui, Wiwa, Kankuamo, Arhuaco and Ette Naka Indigenous groups, whose combined population is approximately 54,700 people. His statement followed a visit to the Sierra Nevada region. *—PTI*

China, Pak agree to expand CPEC to Afg

BEIJING, 21 MAY

China, Pakistan and Afghanistan on Wednesday agreed to expand the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan as top leaders from the three nations agreed to deepen trilateral cooperation.

The announcement was made after Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi held an informal trilateral meeting in Beijing, a statement by the Foreign Office said in Islamabad.

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister–Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi
PHOTO: X/@FOREIGNOFFICEPK

Dar is on a three day visit to Beijing, the first high-level interaction after India launched Operation Sindoor, targeting terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

"Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan stand together for regional peace, stability, and development," Dar posted on X and shared a photo of the three leaders together. "They (the three ministers) agreed to deepen Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation and extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan." They also underscored their shared commitment to countering terrorism in the region. *—PTI*

EU vows to lift sanctions on Syria, not on Assad regime

BARCELONA, 21 MAY

The European Union will lift sanctions on Syria's economy but keep the ones targeting the former Assad regime in place, the EU's top diplomat announced on Tuesday.

Foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said this after chairing a meeting of foreign ministers from the 27-member bloc.

She said the decision was designed to avert poverty and radicalism in the country after more than a decade of civil war sent millions fleeing. *—PTI*

5 radicals plotting attacks held in Germany

BERLIN, 21 MAY

German police on Wednesday arrested five people accused of involvement with far-Right group "Last Defence Wave" that allegedly aimed to destabilise the country's democratic system by carrying out attacks on migrants and political opponents.

The early-morning arrests in various parts of Germany were accompanied by searches at 13 properties, federal prosecutors said.

Four of those arrested — Benjamin H, Ben-Maxim H, Lenny M and Jason R— are suspected of membership in a domestic terror organisation. The fifth, Jerome M, is accused of supporting the group. Two of the arrested also are accused of attempted murder and aggravated arson. *—PTI*

HONOUR AFTER FOUR DECADES

Burkina Faso inspired by 'Africa's Che Guevara'

OUAGADOUGOU, 21 MAY

The military rulers of Burkina Faso have turned to a man once known as "Africa's Che Guevara" as a way to rally a country struggling to defeat extremists and turning away from former Western allies.

Hundreds of young people gathered over the weekend in the capital, Ouagadougou, for the opening of a mausoleum for legendary leader Thomas Sankara.

A charismatic Marxist leader who defiantly declared his country could rely on itself, Sankara came to power in 1983 at the age of 33 after he and then ally Blaise Compaore led a coup that overthrew a military faction. But in 1987, Compaore turned on his friend in a coup that killed Sankara to become President himself.

Nearly four decades later, Sankara is being celebrated in Burkina Faso, a nation of 23 million people once known for its bustling arts and vibrant intellectual life – including Sankara's anti-imperialist and pan-African legacy.

Sankara's mausoleum, designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning architect Francis Kéré, has been the project of current military leader Captain Ibrahim Traore. Since taking power during a coup in 2022, Traore has presented himself as the new Sankara. He has named one of the main streets after the revolutionary, elevated him to the rank of Hero of the Nation and revived revolutionary slogans such as "Fatherland or death, we will win!" in speeches. *—PTI*

Thomas Sankara's mausoleum has been the project of current military leader Captain Ibrahim Traore **PHOTO: X**

PHOTO: PTI

Gold prices regain ₹1,910 to reach ₹98,450/10g

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Gold prices rebounded by Rs 1,910 to Rs 98,450 per 10g in the national capital as rising global uncertainties triggered a fresh wave of safe-haven buying. According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 96,540 per 10g on Tuesday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 1,870 to Rs 98,000 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday from the previous day's close of Rs 96,130 per 10g. In addition, silver prices climbed Rs 1,660 to Rs 99,160 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. Silver had finished at Rs 97,500 per kg in the previous market close. On the global front, spot gold rose USD 21.79 or 0.66 per cent to USD 3,311.76 per ounce. —*PTI*

Rupee falls by 1P, closes at 85.59 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day down by 1 paisa at 85.59 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, on dollar demand from importers and foreign banks as well as surge in crude oil prices. Forex traders said market sentiment soured under pressure from rising US Treasury yields and persistent foreign fund outflows. However, positive domestic markets and a weak US dollar index cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.65 and moved between an intraday high of 85.53 and a low of 85.70 against the greenback. The unit ended the session lower at 85.59 (provisional), registering a fall of 1 paisa over its previous closing level. —*PTI*

Adani operational RE capacity rises to 14.5 Gigawatt

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) on Wednesday said its total operational renewable generation capacity has increased to 14.5 Gigawatt (GW). Adani Renewable Energy Fifty Seven Ltd, a wholly-owned step down subsidiary of the company, has operationalised an incremental solar power project of 187.5 Megawatt (MW) at Khavda, Gujarat. With operationalisation of this plant, AGEL's total operational renewable energy generation capacity has increased to 14,528.4MW, the company said in a filing. Based on the relevant clearances, it was decided at 8.11am on 21 May, 2025 to operationalise the plant from 22 May, 2025. —*PTI*

Report: Only 1 of 4 banks use AI for competitive gain

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Only one out of four banks worldwide is using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to gain a competitive advantage over peers, even as such emerging technologies are fundamentally transforming the banking sector, according to a report by consultancy firm Boston Consulting Group (BCG). The banking industry is at a pivotal point in 2025. AI is no longer an emerging trend--it is a game-changer, unlocking new frontiers in efficiency, accessibility, and economic growth. BCG's report, "The AI Reckoning in Banking," outlines how artificial intelligence--especially generative and agentic AI--is fundamentally transforming the banking industry. The report also highlighted a widening gap between banks that are leading the AI shift and those falling dangerously behind. —*PTI*

India well-placed to tackle US tariff impacts: Moody's

Auto sector faces global trade challenges despite varied ops

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

India is well-positioned to deal with the negative effects of US tariffs and global trade disruptions as domestic growth drivers and low dependence on exports anchor the economy, Moody's Ratings said on Wednesday.

In a note on India, the agency said government initiatives to boost private consumption, expand manufacturing capacity and increase infrastructure spending will help offset the weakening outlook for global demand.

Easing inflation offers the potential for interest rate cuts to further support the economy, even as the banking sector's liquidity facilitates lending.

Besides, the Pakistan-India tensions, including the flare-up earlier in May, would weigh on Pakistan's growth more than on India's.

"In a scenario of sustained escalation in localised tensions, we do not expect major disruptions to India's economic activity because it has minimal economic relations with Pakistan. Moreover, the parts of India that produce most of its agricultural and industrial output are geographically distant from the conflict zones," Moody's said. However, higher defense spending would potentially weigh on India's fiscal strength and slow its fiscal consolidation.

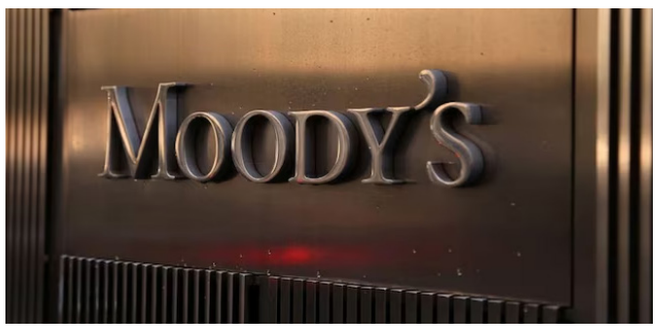
The central government's infrastructure spending supports GDP growth, while personal income tax cuts bolster consumption.

India's limited reliance on the trade of goods and its robust service sector are mitigants to US tariffs. Nonetheless, sectors such as autos, which have some exports to the US, face global trade challenges despite their diversified operations.

Moody's had earlier this month lowered its economic growth projections for the 2025 calendar year to 6.3 per cent, from 6.7 per cent, but its growth rate will be the highest among G-20 economies.

In early April, the US administration announced and then paused for 90 days the implementation of sweeping, country-specific tariffs on trading partners.

It maintained a base tariff of 10 per cent, with exemptions for some sectors and higher tariffs imposed previously for other sectors, including steel and aluminium. –*PTI*



- In a note on India, Moody's Ratings said government initiatives to boost private consumption, expand manufacturing capacity and increase infrastructure spending will help offset the weakening outlook for global demand

CCPA issues notice to Uber over 'Advance Tip'

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

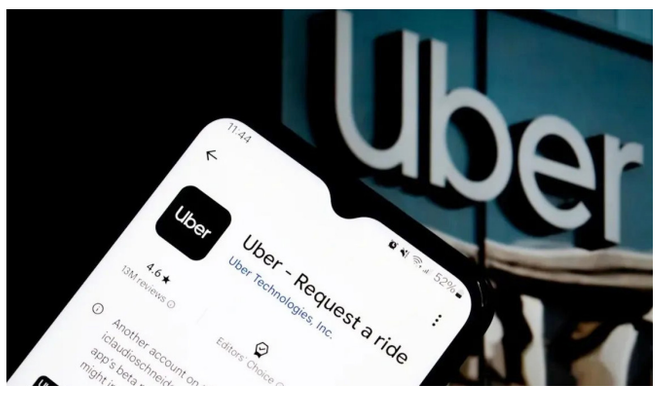
Consumer protection watchdog Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has issued a notice to ride-hailing platform Uber for allegedly "forcing or nudging" users to pay advance tips for faster service.

"The practice of 'Advance Tip' is deeply concerning," Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said in a social media post. "Forcing or nudging users to pay a tip in advance, for faster service is unethical and exploitative. Such actions fall under unfair trade practices," he wrote.

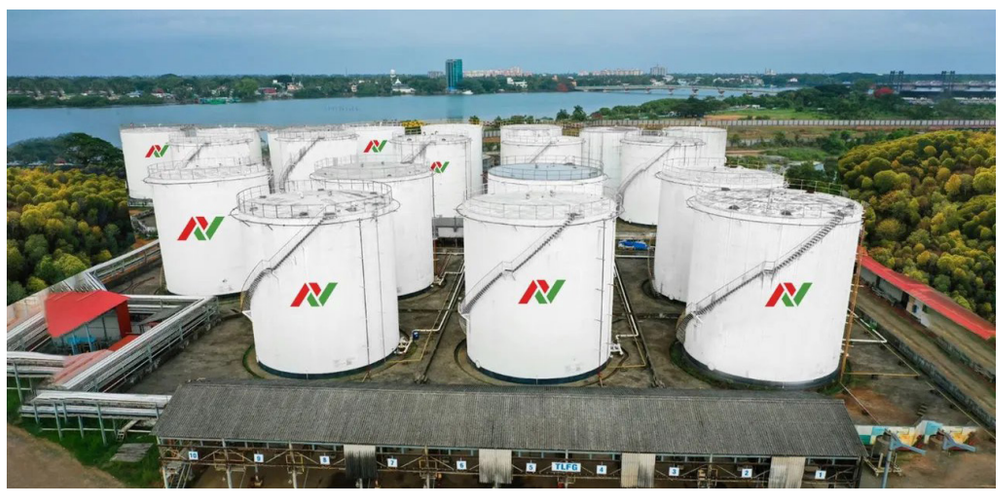
Joshi emphasised that tipping is meant as a token of appreciation, given after service completion, not as an entitlement beforehand.

Taking cognisance of the issue, the minister directed the CCPA to investigate the matter. "Today CCPA has issued a notice to Uber in this regard, seeking explanation from the platform," he posted.

"Fairness, transparency and accountability must be upheld in all customer interactions," Joshi added. — *PTI*



Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said nudging users to pay a tip in advance for faster service is unethical and exploitative PHOTO: ANI



Brokerages said the company is valued around Rs 26,000 crore at the upper-end of the price band PHOTO: ANI

Aegis Vopak IPO to open on 26 May

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Aegis Vopak Terminals, a subsidiary of Aegis Logistics Ltd, on Wednesday said it has fixed a price band of Rs 223 to Rs 235 per share for its Rs 2,800-crore initial public offering (IPO).

The company is valued around Rs 26,000 crore at the upper-end of the price band, brokerages said. The initial share-sale will open for public subscription on 26 May and conclude on 28 May. The bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on 23 May, the company said. The IPO is entirely a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 2,800 crore with no offer-for-sale component, according to the red herring prospectus (RHP). Previously, the IPO was planned to raise Rs 3,500 crore.

Proceeds worth Rs 2,016 crore will be used for payment of debt, Rs 671.30 crore to fund capital expenditure for the acquisition of a cryogenic LPG terminal at Mangalore.

The company announced that 75 per cent of the issue size has been reserved for qualified institutional buyers, 15 per cent for non-institutional buyers and the remaining 10 per cent for retail investors. — *PTI*

Biofuels sector could help energy transition: S&P

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

India's rapidly growing biofuels industry is very important to the country's energy transformation, balancing economic growth with sustainability, according to a report by S&P Global. It said the transport sector is a major source of emissions heavily reliant on imported fuels, is a key focus for biofuel integration.

The report said India is prioritising a 'multi-fuel mix' strategy rather solely focusing on battery electric vehicles and hybrids and "original equipment manufacturers in India are actively exploring and developing biofuel technologies". This ups energy security, lowers greenhouse gas emissions, and boosts the agricultural economy.

Bioethanol production is expanding, with India nearing its 20 per cent blending target, though a more concerted effort is required to overcome existing hurdles. India's transport sector is characterised by rising energy demand and environmental concerns, driven by rapid economic expansion.

However, the company believes that by reducing our reliability on crude oil and liquefied natural gas imports, biofuel can help in conserving "valuable foreign exchange and help in enhancing economic resilience and self-reliance." — *ANI*

ASIAN PEERS STRONG

Markets rebound after 3-day slide

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Wednesday, snapping their three-day falling streak on the back of buying in blue-chips HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank and a firm trend in Asian peers.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 410.19 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 81,596.63 with 24 of its constituents ending higher and six ending lower. During the day, it surged 835.2 points or 1.02 per cent to a high of 82,021.64.

The NSE Nifty climbed 129.55 points or 0.52 per cent to 24,813.45.

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv rose the most by 2.02 per cent. Tata Steel, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Nestle, Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever and Mahindra & Mahindra also advanced.

IndusInd Bank fell the most by 1.39 per cent. Kotak Mahindra Bank, Power Grid and ITC were among the laggards.

Moody's Ratings said on Wednesday said India is well-positioned to deal with the negative effects of US tariffs and global trade disruptions as domestic growth drivers and low dependence on exports anchor the economy.

The BSE midcap gauge advanced 0.90 per cent and smallcap index by 0.51 per cent. Among sectoral indices, capital goods (1.65 per cent), realty (1.58 per cent), industrials (1.35 per cent), healthcare (0.93 per cent) and teck (0.81 per cent) were the gainers.

Consumer durables emerged as the only laggard. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv rose the most by 2.02 per cent. Tata Steel, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Nestle, Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever and Mahindra & Mahindra also advanced

EASEMYTRIP DEFENDS FOUNDER IN MAHADEV APP BETTING CASE

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Travel booking platform EaseMyTrip on Wednesday denied allegations against its founder and chairman Nishant Pitti in the Mahadev app betting case, terming the claims "entirely baseless, misleading, and devoid of factual merit".

Pitti has reportedly been accused of colluding with a network of operators who allegedly used proceeds from the illegal betting operation to manipulate the stock prices of 25 listed companies, purportedly in connivance with their promoters.

The Enforcement Directorate in April searched the premises of Pitti as part of fresh multi-state raids in the Mahadev online betting app-linked money laundering case.

The raids covered 55 locations including Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Ahmedabad, Indore, Jaipur, Chennai and Sambalpur in Odisha.

"We categorically and unequivocally deny the allegations reported in connection with our Founder and Chairman, Nishant Pitti, concerning the so-called Mahadev app betting case. These claims are entirely baseless, misleading, and devoid of factual merit," EaseMyTrip said in a statement.

Pitti has had no involvement, direct or indirect, with any illegal betting operations or entities related to the Mahadev app, it added. Clarifying further, EaseMyTrip claimed that "two entities" independently purchased EaseMyTrip shares through the open market in May 2021. —*PTI*

Fortnite back on iPhone app store in US

NEW YORK, 21 MAY

The popular video game Fortnite has returned to the iPhone app store in the US, ending a prolonged exile that was triggered by a legal showdown over the lucrative fees that Apple had been collecting for years through a payment system that it has been forced to change.

Fortnite hailed its app's long-awaited restoration to the iPhone and iPad in a Tuesday post, marking the first time it will be available on those devices since it was ousted in 2020 for trying to avoid the 15 per cent to 30 cent commissions that Apple collects on in-app transactions.

The video game featuring a virtual fight on a digital island is coming back to the iPhone just a few days after its parent company, Epic Games, filed a motion asking a federal judge to order its return as part of a civil contempt of court finding issued against Apple late last month.

In a brief statement filed in court late Tuesday, Apple said the dispute that had been keeping Fortnite off its iOS software for the iPhone had been resolved — *PTI*

BOOSTING FMCG SECTOR

50% of food budget spent on packaged items

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Urban consumers allocate nearly 50 per cent of their food budgets to packaged and prepared foods, giving a significant boost to the FMCG sector, said a recent Deloitte–FICCI report.

The report further adds that the rural Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) volumes experienced a 6 per cent growth in the third quarter of the financial year 2024.

The agriculture and food processing sector, representing nearly 30 per cent of the national food market, is gaining momentum due to rising rural demand, digital advancements and strong policy support.

The report adds that with a valuation of about USD 160 billion, the agriculture and food processing sector reflects India's economic rise, marked by the country's rank as the fifth-largest economy and a doubling of per capita income to Rs 1.97 lakh over the past nine years.

With consumption trends aligning across urban and rural India, Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities are fast becoming engines of economic growth, the report said.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- The agriculture and food processing sector, representing nearly 30 per cent of the national food market, is gaining momentum due to rising rural demand, digital advancements and strong policy support

The report says that the premiumisation of products is also an emerging trend, with higher-income consumers driving growth through demand for quality, convenience and indulgence.

There is also a rising curiosity around global cuisines and regional flavours, marking a convergence of heritage and innovation in consumer preferences, the Deloitte–FICCI report said. —*ANI*

67% of job seekers open to new roles: LinkedIn

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

Even though 67 per cent of professionals interviewed are open to new opportunities, they do not know what job titles or industries to search for, a report said on Wednesday.

According to research by professional network LinkedIn, 65 per cent of professionals stated they can explain their career goals to a friend but don't know how to search for that role, and 64 per cent find job filters confusing.

"Two-thirds (67 per cent) of professionals in India say they're open to new opportunities, however, they don't know what job titles or industries to search for," the report said.

Another 74 per cent wished they could discover relevant roles they hadn't thought to search for, it said.

As job titles evolve and skills become central to hiring decisions, there is increasing demand among job seekers for easier ways to find opportunities based on their skills and goals, rather than predefined titles or keywords, it added.

The report by LinkedIn is based on inputs from over 2,001 employed and unemployed respondents aged 18-78 years between 25 April, to 6 May, 2025. — *PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Zimbabwe faces England in first Test since 2003

NOTTINGHAM, 21 MAY

For England, it's little more than a warm-up match ahead of much sterner examinations to come. For Zimbabwe, it means everything. Trent Bridge in Nottingham will host a four-day test match something of a rarity for the usual five-day format but perhaps a sign of the future from Thursday, when England and Zimbabwe meet for the first time at international level in 18 years since a Twenty20 World Cup match in Cape Town. You need to go back four more years to Chester-le-Street in 2003, when Jimmy Anderson, a 20-year-old with highlights in his hair, was playing in his first series for the last test match between the teams. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Jabra Ladies Open: Diksha leads Indian charge

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 21 MAY

In-form Indian golfer Diksha Dagar will look to build on her top-10 finishes and aim for the title when she tees off at the Ladies European Tour's Jabra Open starting here on Thursday. Aside from Diksha, the Indian challenge will also include Tvesa Malik, Avani Prashanth, and Hitaashee Bakshi. Pranavi Urs, who injured her wrist during the Dutch Ladies Open and had to withdraw, will rest out this week and next week. Diksha has moved into the top five of the Order of Merit after finishing tied ninth at the Dutch Ladies Open, while Avani is placed 39th in that list after her tied 19th finish at the same event.*—PTI*

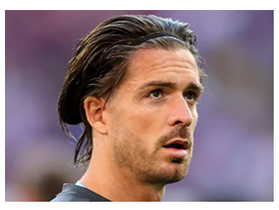


PHOTO: X

Pep to decide on Jack's future at end of season

DUBAI, 21 MAY

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola will decide on Jack Grealish's future at the end of the season. Grealish has fallen out of favour with Guardiola since his starring role in City's 2023 treble-winning campaign. The 29-year-old has made just seven Premier League starts this term and was left on the bench as City crashed to a shock 1-0 defeat in Saturday's FA Cup final against Crystal Palace. That snub has fuelled speculation that the England winger could leave the Etihad Stadium during the summer transfer window.*—PTI*

Bhambri-Galloway pair goes out of Geneva Open

GENEVA, 21 MAY

Second seeds Yuki Bhambri and Robert Galloway suffered a first-round exit at the Geneva Open following a tough battle against the German team of Jakob Schnaitter and Mark Wallner here Wednesday. The Indo-American pair lost 6-7(3) 4-6 to the unseeded rivals in the Round of 16 at the Euro 5,96,035 clay-court tournament, which is the last in the run-up to the French Open, the clay-court major. Bhambri and Galloway split Euro 3,240 as prize money, but no points were awarded since it was a first-round loss. Last week, Bhambri and Galloway had ended runners-up at the Bordeaux Challenger, his best performance since the clay-court season began. *—PTI*

GT eye top-two finish as struggling Lucknow look to salvage pride

For Gujarat, everything seems to have fallen into place

AHMEDABAD, 21 MAY

Former champions Gujarat Titans will aim to extend their winning streak to solidify a top-two finish when they face a struggling Lucknow Super Giants in their Indian Premier League clash on Thursday.

With 18 points from 12 matches, table-toppers Titans have already booked their place in the playoffs. However, with Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Punjab Kings close behind on 17 points, the race for a top-two spot is still very much alive.

For Gujarat, everything seems to have fallen into place. Their top-order trio of Orange Cap holder B Sai Sudharsan (617 runs), skipper Shubman Gill (601), and Jos Buttler (500), has been in prolific form, laying the foundation for most of the team's victories.

Together, they have racked up 16 half-centuries and a century, dominating the tournament's batting attacks with clinical consistency.

Such top-order dominance, however, has left the middle order largely untested.

Gujarat's bowling unit has been equally formidable. Their Indian pace battery has led the charge, with Prasidh Krishna being the leading wicket-taker this season after snaring 21 wickets. Mohammed Siraj and lanky left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore have chipped in with 15 wickets each.

Adding further firepower to the attack is the return of South African pace ace Kagiso Rabada, who missed most of the season following a suspension for recreational drug use.

On the other hand, Lucknow Super Giants saw their playoff hopes dashed after a comprehensive defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday. The Rishabh Pant-led side, now on a four-match losing streak, has endured a campaign riddled with inconsistency and injuries.

LSG has leaned heavily on their overseas recruits Mitchell Marsh, Aiden Markram, and Nicholas Pooran for runs.

KKR questions change in IPL playing conditions over extra time

Kolkata Knight Riders have questioned BCCI's decision to change IPL's playing conditions in the middle of the tournament, specifically the extension of the time allowance for completing a full match.

KKR CEO Venky Mysore confirmed to PTI that he has sent a letter to IPL COO Hemang Amin questioning the board's decision to extend the extra time for completing a full game to 120 minutes from 60 minutes.

What prompted Mysore to write the letter to Amin was their rained out game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru on May 17 that effectively ended their slim hopes of making the play-offs. *—PTI*

Rishabh Pant and Shubman Gill
PHOTO: PTI

GT VS LSG

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	6
GT Won:	4
LSG Won:	2

GT vs LSG Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

IPL HAS BEEN A LIFE-CHANGER FOR ME: VIPRAJ

NEW DELHI, 6 JUNE

Delhi Capitals all-rounder Vipraj Nigam feels the ongoing IPL has brought a lot of changes in his life, and said the learnings that he got by sharing the dressing room with greats of the game will help him in his nascent career. The 20-year-old Nigam, who was picked for Rs 50 lakh by DC, has been impressive in the IPL with both bat and ball. Reflecting on the life-changing experience of sharing the dressing room with senior players, Nigam said: "There have been a lot of life changes. With the IPL, things always change - you get the chance to share the field with such big, senior players, to learn from how they go about things, and to experience their approach up close.

These are all new experiences for me, and I'll try to apply the same learnings in my own game. *—PTI*

DESERVE TO FINISH CSK AT BOTTOM: FLEMING

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

In a candid admission of their pathetic run this IPL season, Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming said they deserve to finish at the bottom of the table but promised to come back with "strong ideas".

One of the most consistent sides in the popular league, five-time champions CSK, are set to finish last behind Rajasthan Royals, to whom they lost by six wickets on Tuesday in their penultimate IPL clash this season. It is not a sight cricket fans are used to considering CSK's tremendous success in the past. "No, we don't like being down here, but it's not a motivation. We wanted just a good performance. We're trying to string some performances together. The aim was two good performances (in the last two matches).

"Now it'll be one good one to finish. It's probably fitting that we're at the bottom. We've played that type of cricket, so you can't hide away from it," Fleming said after the match. *—PTI*

Laver Cup to be hosted at London's O2 Arena

LAUSANNE, 21 MAY

The 2026 men's Laver Cup tennis tournament between Team Europe and Team World will be held at London's O2 Arena from September 25-27, organisers said on Wednesday.The O2 Arena also held the event's fifth edition in 2022.

This year's eighth tournament is set to take place in San Francisco from September 19-21."The response from London from fans, partners and players was truly overwhelming, Laver Cup chairman Tony Godsick said in a statement. The appetite to see Laver Cup return was impossible to ignore."The tournament, named after Australian great Rod Laver, pits six top players from Europe and the rest of the world against each other in singles and doubles matches.

Defending champion Team Europe has won five of the seven editions so far. *—PTI*

NBA Playoffs: Thunder rout Wolves in opener

NEW YORK, 21 MAY

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander overcame a slow start to score 31 points to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 114-88 home win over the Minnesota Timber wolves in Game 1 of the NBA Western Conference finals on Tuesday.

It was Gilgeous-Alexander's fourth consecutive game with 30 or more points and his eighth in 12 playoff games this season. He added a game-high nine assists. With seven minutes left in the fourth quarter, Gilgeous-Alexander drove toward the basket and began falling, flipping the ball toward the bucket as he went down. The ball rolled around the rim briefly before dropping through, and Jaden McDaniels was called for the foul. Gilgeous-Alexander finished off the three-point play to put the Thunder up by 14. He finished 10 of 27 from the floor and 0 of 4 from 3-point range, but he made 11 of 14 from the free-throw line. Early on, the Timberwolves' defense gave Gilgeous-Alexander fits, holding him to just 2-of-13 shooting in the first half. *—PTI*

NAGAL BOWS OUT OF FRENCH OPEN QUALIFYING

PARIS, 21 MAY

India's top singles player Sumit Nagal bowed out of the French Open singles qualifying following a 2-6, 4-6 defeat against lower-ranked Jurij Rodionov in the second round, here Wednesday.

Nagal, ranked 170th, lost to the 225th-ranked Austrian in one hour and 29 minutes at the Roland Garros. He had beaten American Mitchell Krueger in the first round.

He again fell back in the next game, losing the first two points to be 0-30, but managed to hold, making it 4-4. Serving out to stay in the match, Nagal dropped serve in the 10th game to exit. *—PTI*

JUNIOR WORLD CUP

Kanak clinches air pistol gold

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Budding Haryana shooter Kanak opened India's account at the ISSF Junior World Cup in Germany with a gold medal in women's 10m air pistol on Wednesday.

The 17-year-old, a junior World Championship silver medallist in Lima last year, scored 239.0 in the 24-shot eight-woman final to upstage Anna Dulce of Moldova, a two-time Olympian and reigning European champion, by 1.7 points.

Chinese Taipei's Chen Yen-Ching won the bronze medal in the event taking place in Suhl.Earlier, two Indian shooters qualified for the final, with Prachi securing a spot behind Kanak in fifth place as they shot scores of 571 and 57,2, respectively.Kanak then showed her experience at this level, bringing out the big 10s when it mattered most towards the closing stages of the final to win with ease."I was a little bit nervous in the beginning, but I am happy that I was able to close out well," she said after the match.

It was Prachi who remained in the top three from the start of the final and looked in contention for a medal.

Prachi shot a poor 8.6 while Kanak took the lead with a soaring 10.5.As Prachi faded away, Kanak then shot three high 10s, a slim 10.1, and three high 9s (9.7, 9.8, 9.9) in her next nine shots to pull away from the field.She closed the contest with a 9.4, which will not please her coaches, but by then the gold was in her bag. *—PTI*

PRANNOY, KARUNAKARAN, SRIKANTH REGISTER WINS; SINDHU EXITS

KUALA LUMPUR, 6 JUNE

India's male shuttlers, led by the experienced duo of H S Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth, were off to a brilliant start, but it was curtains for double Olympic-medallist PV Sindhu as she bowed out with a first-round loss at the Malaysia Masters badminton tournament here on Wednesday. Prannoy and Srikanth were joined by Satish Karunakaran in the second round of the event.

Taking the court first, Prannoy stunned fifth seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan 19-21, 21-17, 21-16 in a hard-fought contest that lasted one hour and 22 minutes. The Indian will play Yushi Tanaka of Japan in the second round. Karunakaran also registered an upset by stunning third seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei 21-13, 21-14 in just 39 minutes. He will next face Christo Popov of France.

Ayush Shetty also progressed after getting past Brian Yang of Canada 20-22 21-10 21-8. Later, former world no.1 Srikanth stunned a higher-ranked opponent in sixth seed Lu Guang Zu of China 23-21 13-21 21-11 in a 57-minute showdown to progress. But Sindhu's poor form continued as she failed to get past the opening hurdle of the Super 500 tournament, losing 11-21, 21-1,4-15-21 against Nguyen Thuy Linh of Vietnam. The Indian mixed doubles duo of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto also moved into the second round with a 21-18, 15-21, 21-14 win over the Indonesian pair of Adnan Maulana and Indah Cahya Sari Jamil, but all other Indian pairs suffered defeats. *—PTI*

PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy

PHOTO: PTI

PREMIER LEAGUE

Omar Marmoush scores stunning goal

MANCHESTER, 21 MAY

Omar Marmoush's stunning long-range strike upstaged Kevin De Bruyne on the Manchester City great's Etihad farewell.

Marmoush let fly from around 30 yards (meters) to put City ahead in its 3-1 win against Bournemouth in the Premier League on Tuesday. The victory moved Pep Guardiola's team up to third in the standings and left Champions League qualification in its own hands heading into the last round of the season. "It's really important. To be in the Champions League after what happened (this season) will be nice," the City manager said.

De Bruyne was making his final home appearance for City before leaving the club as a free agent at the end of the season. After a trophy-laden 10 years, the Belgium international was greeted with a huge banner declaring him "King Kev" and given a standing ovation when he was substituted off in the second half.

But it was Marmoush's goal after 14 minutes that lit up the match as his dipping shot clipped the post before crashing into the top corner. It was the type of goal that De Bruyne would have been proud of in a career that has seen him score numerous spectacular strikes of his own.

Tottenham and Man United fans clash ahead of Europa League final

Clashes between fans of Tottenham and Manchester United have been reported ahead of the Europa League final in Spain on Wednesday.

Confrontations took place in the center of Bilbao and in some nearby cities where many of the supporters were staying to avoid overpriced accommodation in the host city.

More than 50,000 English fans were expected in the Basque Country city of Bilbao, according to local officials.

There were no reports of serious injuries in the confrontations, which happened mostly overnight as fans arrived. *—PTI*

Omar Marmoush

Ex-Olympic wrestler Gatsalov charged with doping

LAUSANNE, 21 MAY

Former Olympic champion wrestler Khadjimourat Gatsalov was charged with doping Wednesday as part of the state-backed cheating scheme in Russia.

Gatsalov was a gold medalist at the 2004 Athens Olympics. He beat future UFC champion Daniel Cormier in a semifinal bout in the freestyle 96-kilogram class.

The 42-year-old Russian is being prosecuted using evidence from investigations by Richard McLaren and the World Anti-Doping Agency, including data from the Moscow testing laboratory, the International Testing Agency said. He tested positive for the banned substance ipamorelin from a sample given in 2015, the ITA said in a statement.

The drug "stimulates the body's release of growth hormone, which, in turn, promotes muscle growth, fat loss and recovery," said the agency based in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Gatsalov's provisional suspension during the prosecution also prevents him working as a coach or official at national or international events, the ITA said. *—PTI*

Khadjimourat Gatsalov